THE

Perplexed Lovers:

OR, THE

HISTORY

OF

Sir EDWARD BALCHEN, Bart.

VOL. II.

BRITISH MUSEUM

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In THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY W. HOGGARD,
FOR
FRANCIS NOBLE, at his Circulating Library, near *Middle-Row, Holborn*;
AND
JOHN NOBLE, at his Circulating Library, in *St. Martin's Court*, near *Leicester-Square*.

MDCCLXVIII.

BRITISH MUSEUM

THE HISTORY OF Sir EDWARD BALCHEN, Bart.

BOOK III.

MYRA, who was preſent when his lordſhip left Mr. Elrington for the purpoſe mentioned in the firſt volume, went down, with her head and heart full of Sir Edward, who was alſo abſent, to the garden, for a little air, as ſhe

had kept pretty close to the house while Lord George remained at Elm-Walk. It was a fine warm evening in the beginning of May. The beauties of the surrounding prospects, the stillness and brightness of the Moon, shining with uninterrupted lustre, the warbling of the Nightingales from some lofty trees over her head, together with her own melancholy reflections, tempted her to stay out longer than she used to do. She was, however, thinking about her return to the house, when Lord George unexpectedly appeared before her. She started: at no time would she willingly have met him; but she was still more shocked to meet him alone, at a distance from the house, in the dusk of the evening. She had but a moment to consider how to act

(for

(for he immediately accoſted her) and in that moment reſolved to tell him that ſhe muſt haſten to Mr. Elrington who ſhe knew wanted her.

My lord ſtopped her, notwithſtanding, and with a profuſion of amorous nonſenſe endeavoured to prevail on her to hear him, ſwearing by her lovely eyes that he had adored her from the firſt inſtant he beheld her all-powerful charms, and had only waited for an opportunity to let her know that the violence of his paſſion was now become irreſiſtible. From words he proceeded to action, and, throwing his arm around her, was hurrying her to a ſeat, when ſhe, collecting all her ſtrength, ſprung from his arms, though he held her faſt by the gown, and with a look ineffably diſdainful, ſaid, I thought my lord,

that the hoſpitable reception which you had met with from Mr. Elrington would have at leaſt protected any part of his family from inſult.

Here ſhe ſtopped: ſtriving with all her force to recover her liberty. He again ſeized her, and ſwore that her ſpirit and her pride, had only added fuel to the flame which love had kindled in his breaſt: that ſhe was now in his power, and that he muſt be every way weak indeed, to let her eſcape from him.

Terrified to death at his menaces, which were rendered more alarming by the fiery impatience in his looks, and by the efforts which he made to retard her flight, ſhe ſcreamed as loudly as ſhe could.

Sir

Sir Edward, who had from the end of the walk ſeen her ſtruggling with a man by the light of the Moon, flew to reſcue her from his rude hands. In a tone, and in a manner which ſtruck no ſmall timidity into his lordſhip, who was a much greater hero with the fair ſex than with his own, he fiercely demanded why that lady was detained againſt her inclination: Let her go, added he, doubling the fierceneſs of his accent, let her go this inſtant.

My lord did indeed leave Myra at liberty directly, but quitted her in ſuch a manner that ſhe muſt have inſtantly fallen to the ground, had not Sir Edward caught her in his arms: for her firſt apprehenſions on her own account, joined to thoſe which ſhe felt for Sir Edward, leſt he ſhould be brought

into danger, abſolutely deprived her of her ſenſes and ſhe fainted away.

My lord, as ſoon as he could a little recollect himſelf, thought it neceſſary to ſay ſomething, but being thoroughly convinced, libertine as he was, that he had acted a ſcandalous part, and that he ſhould be deemed highly culpable by Sir Edward, whoſe character he well knew was diametrically oppoſite to his own, (thinking alſo that it was not on any account worth his while to venture his pretty perſon for a woman,) muttered ſome imperfect ſentences, and walked off. But had he acted in a different manner, Sir Edward would not, at that time, have honoured him with the leaſt attention, as his whole care was how to recover Miſs Belladen, whom he carried to the ſeat to which

Lord

Lord George would have borne her for a very different purpoſe.

He preſſed her ardently to his boſom: he called upon her in the tendereſt accents to look up, and aſſured her over and over that ſhe was ſafe; that nobody was near her but himſelf, who was, and ever would be, her ſincereſt friend.

For ſome time ſhe made no reply. She was indeed, unable to make one: for when ſhe was firſt reſtored to her ſenſes, and found herſelf in the arms of the man whom ſhe adored: (who hung over her with the moſt enamoured air, and who lamented her ſituation, and his own, at the ſame time, becauſe it prevented him from procuring her proper aſſiſtance) when ſhe conſidered too what ſervice he had juſt done her, in doing which, his own life

might have been endangered, ſhe felt her whole heart ſo ſoftened that ſhe could not utter a word: ſighs only iſſued from her gentle boſom in great abundance.

Theſe ſighs gave him hopes that ſhe was returning to life, and though he then began to be leſs profuſe of his tender expreſſions, confining himſelf chiefly to thoſe which the delicacy of her ſituation, and what he felt within, drew from him, yet ſome ſuch expreſſions eſcaped him (rejoiced as he was to ſee thoſe beloved eyes once more look up to him) which at another time he would not have ventured to pronounce.

This behaviour of his, joined to his gratitude, made her for a moment, and but for a moment, forget every thing

but

but the favours which ſhe had juſt received from him. With a look of exquiſite ſweetneſs, in a voice weakened and rendered tremulous by her late fright, and her preſent touching ſituation, ſhe ſaid, I return you a thouſand thanks Sir Edward, for delivering me from ſo great a danger: in doing which, I hope, continued ſhe, with the utmoſt eagerneſs, you have not brought yourſelf into any: I ſhould then be miſerable indeed.

Do not be alarmed, my dear Myra, replied Sir Edward, (charmed with this very firſt ſymptom of regard, which he had never obſerved in her for him, and which he then only attributed to her gratitude for the ſeaſonable relief he had afforded her,) no harm can happen to me while you are but well. The

conſequences of your fright, added he, tenderly preſſing her hands in his as ſhe roſe up to walk, have affected me beyond expreſſion. Have you ſtrength to walk home? Stay a little — how could that villain inſult you thus? Had not the danger in which I ſaw you, engroſſed my attention, I ſhould have ſeverely corrected him.

Oh! heavens! cried Myra, trembling from head to foot, ſure you would not have ventured your valuable life againſt that of ſo worthleſs a wretch?

My life, my dear girl, ſaid he, will be no longer valued by me, when your peace and preſervation demand it.

Theſe ſounds, though they were very enchanting to the ear of Myra, and though they penetrated her ſoul, made her thoughtful, and gave her pain. Her

engagemen

engagement with Weſtbury darted into her mind—ſhe roſe up haſtily—I am now well enough to go home, Sir Edward, ſaid ſhe, and ſhall never forget the ſervice you have done me.

He looked at her, as if he wiſhed to detain her, but as ſhe ſeemed to be determined he made no offer to retard her departure.

In their way to the houſe, ſhe told him that, believing Lord George was gone to the village, ſhe had ſtroled into the garden, having for ſome time not cared to meet him alone, and told him in what manner he had ſurprized her. When they came home, ſhe made the ſame relation to Mr. Elrington, who, very much ſhocked at this baſe return to his civility, enquired for Lord George, intending to take him to talk for his

behaviour, but was ſoon informed that his lordſhip had moved off directly for London, after having ordered his gentleman to diſtribute the cuſtomary fees among the ſervants, who was not long after his lord.

Upon Miſs Gilmour's coming into the room, and being acquainted with Lord George's attack upon Myra, ſhe ſaid that ſhe was not at all ſurprized at it. I am pretty ſure, continued ſhe, that his lordſhip deſigned the ſame favour for me, but I have been lucky enough to baffle all his ſchemes of that kind.

'Tis very well you have, replied the good Mr. Elrington, who thought that his neice had been too free in her behaviour with his lordſhip, and adviſed her to take care for the future to keep men of that ſtamp at a proper

per diſtance: Remember, he added, that *he comes too near who comes to be denied.*

Charlotte received this ſhort, but very expreſſive piece of advice, with a made-up lip and a half-laugh. Myra, trembling at the bare recollection of her own ſenſations when ſhe leaned on the boſom of Sir Edward after her fainting, while he tenderly endeavoured to recover her, felt her cheeks glow with bluſhes, to hide which, ſhe immediately left the room.

As ſoon as Myra and Miſs Gilmour were both gone, Mr. Weſtbury, Sir Edward, ſaid Mr. Elrington, muſt with me pay you a ſecond time his acknowledgments, for the freſh aſſiſtance which you afforded to his deſtined wife.

The

The two laſt words pierced Sir Edward to the ſoul. He could ſcarcely check the emotions which they occaſioned. Turning from the worthy old gentleman he whiſpered to himſelf, His wife? Oh God! what diſtraction do thoſe words ſtir up in my mind! He walked up and down the library for ſome time, in the greateſt agitation, but Mr. Elrington, being now pretty well accuſtomed to theſe ſeeming oddities, took no notice of them to him. He was, indeed, ſo prepoſſeſſed in his favour, on many accounts, and particularly for his late generous behaviour, that he loved him with almoſt as much affection as if he had been his own ſon: he only thought him blameable now and then, for too ſoothing a carriage to Miſs Belladen, but as he hoped

that

that ſhe would ſoon be married, that objection would, he knew, be then removed; and then he flattered himſelf that he ſhould enjoy his company unmoleſted.

Sir Edward had ever a ſtrong propenſity to the ſtudy of phyſic: he was always poring over medical books. Having met with ſomething in his phyſical reſearches which would, he thought, be ſerviceable to Mr. Elrington's diſorder, he prepared a medicine himſelf for him, which proved ſo efficacious that it reſtored the uſe of his right hand, ſo that he could now write; a ſatisfaction of which he had for a long time been deprived.

This fortunate recipe, with the friendly manner in which he propoſed it, procured it, and applied it, conſiderably

rably increaſed Mr. Elrington's eſteem for him and made him hardly able to bear the thoughts of his leaving him. This new proof of his regard for Mr. Elrington tended alſo to endear him more to Miſs Belladen. She had the higheſt veneration for her worthy benefactor: Sir Edward, therefore, by having contributed to reſtore the uſe of his hand, and in ſo benevolent, ſo engaging a manner, had raiſed himſelf extremely in her opinion.

As to Charlotte, ſhe began to be ſo much attached to young Aſtley, that ſhe had but little leiſure to think of any thing elſe.

Sir Edward, though he returned to Mr. Elrington's, the very night on which Lord George quitted Elm-Walk, began to have thoughts of leaving him: he

now

now looked upon Myra as irrecoverably loſt: he believed that the only remedy was flight, which he had found ſo beneficial to him in a former affair of this nature. But then, he had never been ſo deeply affected by Mrs. Wentworth as he was now to Miſs Belladen; and though he had often determined not to ſee her again, he had never been able to prevail on himſelf to leave her; not even for a day: but he found his departure more and more neceſſary, and became at laſt ſo thoroughly convinced that his ſtay in the country would be attended with very diſagreeable conſequences, that he abſolutely reſolved to ſet out for London in a few days at fartheſt.

Juſt when preparations were made for his departure, chance threw Mr. Aſtley

Aſtley in his way. As he continued to uſe a great deal of exerciſe, he one day in his walks, in which he was always accompanied by Fidele, met that young gentleman with a ſpaniel of a larger kind, who, attacking Fidele, was upon the point of treating him too roughly, when Mr. Aſtley, after having called him off, made ſo many apologies to Sir Edward, and acquitted himſelf with ſo much natural politeneſs, that the baronet was greatly pleaſed with him. They entered into converſation. Sir Edward was taken with the modeſt diffidence of his new acquaintance, who was quite charmed with him: and indeed few people of either ſex ever converſed with him who did not find themſelves prejudiced in his favour.

As he ſtrove to avoid Miſs Belladen as much as poſſible, he ſpent more of his time abroad than he would otherwiſe have done. Returning home one evening, (it was a very fine one,) thro' the park, he diſcovered on a bench, placed under a large oak, Miſs Gilmour ſitting with Aſtley at her feet, who had one of her hands in his.

This attitude, with the expreſſive glances which ſhe caſt on him, made Sir Edward conclude that Aſtley was not, at leaſt, a very wretched lover. Superlatively happy would he have thought himſelf to have been in the ſame ſituation with Miſs Belladen. A ſigh, an ardent wiſh eſcaped him as he turned away that they might not ſuppoſe he intended to diſturb them. By ſo doing he gave a proof of his

politeneſs,

politeneſs, but by ſo doing he convinced them that they had been obſerved by him.

Miſs Gilmour was extremely alarmed, and her lover ſeeing her ſo, was himſelf diſturbed.

You are very imprudent Aſtley, ſaid ſhe, I have often told you that I will not ſuffer ſuch freedoms—and you mind me no more——

It is not in my power, interrupted the young gentleman, to conceal either my joy or my love, when you ſmile upon me.

Why then, replied Charlotte briſkly, but ſtill ſmiling, I will always frown for the future.

Cruel angel! ſaid Aſtley, ſighing—you will then abſolutely kill me.

I'll venture that, cried ſhe—there is no danger in my frowns—I queſtion whether they would kill a fly. But I know this Sir Edward will tell my uncle of our intimacy, and I ſhall be ſnubbed upon your account.

But why ſhould you imagine that he will, my dear Miſs Gilmour? Sir Edward Balchen appears to me one of the moſt amiable and beſt-natured men in the world. I have already to-day accidentally met him: I will go in ſearch of him, and endeavour to make him my friend.

Ah! you are quite a blunderer, cried Charlotte—you will infallibly undo us by ſuch a ſtep.

I have the comfort however, replied he, to find by this anxiety of yours, that you do not wiſh that our meeting ſhould be diſcovered. Inſolent

Inſolent Aſtley! replied ſhe, I will not bear ſuch a monſtrous aſſertion—You have taken advantage of my compaſſion for you; but I ſhall learn to treat you in a different manner: all men I ſee, are alike.

Oh! do not ſay ſo, do not even think ſo, my lovely Charlotte, ſaid he, catching her by her gown as ſhe was withdrawing from him, you are well aſſured that all my hopes of happineſs depend upon your generous pity. But—cruel as you are—you raiſe me to felicity in one moment by your ſmiles, and in the next caſt me down again with your anger; unkind, hard-hearted Charlotte!

He looked ſo dejectedly, and ſpoke in ſo plaintive a tone, as if he really felt all that he endeavoured to expreſs,

that

that he became in her eyes totally an object of compaſſion. His looks, his voice, together with his amiable perſon and very pleaſing addreſs, ſo won upon his miſtreſs that ſhe conſented, without heſitation, to receive him into favour again. She left him; but ſhe left him ſatisfied that he had made no eaſily-defaced impreſſion on her heart.

As he was returning homewards with folded arms and down-caſt eyes, he met Sir Edward, who was loſt in thought, almoſt as deeply ſo, as himſelf.

They ran againſt each other as it was duſk. When Sir Edward firſt diſcovered Aſtley, he was going only to bruſh by him with, I beg your pardon ſir, but that young gentleman, who had, from his firſt acquaintance with Sir Edward,

Edward, ſeen ſomething in him which induced him to wiſh to make him his friend, ſtopped, and with a modeſt apology begged to have half an hour's converſation with him.

The reſpectful, but diffident air of Aſtley, with the earneſtneſs of his requeſt, made Sir Edward immediately turn back with him; while he, with a full heart, love-oppreſſed, and replete with anxiety, related the ſtory of his father's unfortunate marriage; the diſtreſs in which himſelf and his mother were involved by his death; the unkindneſs of his grand-father, and his paſſion for Miſs Gilmour, which he could not reſiſt, he ſaid, though he acknowledged that it was very imprudent to indulge it. It is the more impoſſible for me, continued he, to efface the impreſſion

impreſſion which ſhe has made upon me, as a nearer acquaintance with her diſcovers new beauties every day: new beauties in her perſon, new charms in her manners: and I flatter myſelf, from the general good-humour with which I am treated by her, that I am not abſolutely diſagreeable in her eyes. The favour I have to beg of you Sir Edward is, that you would not diſcover our interviews to Mr. Elrington, and that you will aſſiſt me with your advice how to act in an affair on which my peace ſo much depends.

And ſo you really love this giddy girl? ſaid Sir Edward ſmiling. I pity you—I fear that you will have reaſon to repent of your choice. However, though I have no deſire nor intention to interfere in your amours, I will

make uſe of all my intereſt with Sir Robert Aſtley, to prevail on him to receive you as heir to his title and eſtate.

This friendly aſſurance was delivered in a manner which thoroughly convinced the young gentleman to whom it was addreſſed that it came from the heart, and it threw him therefore into tranſports of gratitude: he was ready to proſtrate himſelf at the feet of Sir Edward had he not prevented him by force. I will immediately inform Mr. Elrington, ſaid he, of every thing you have related to me.

Aſtley, alarmed at this ſpeech, fearing that he ſhould for ever be deprived of the ſight of Miſs Gilmour, ſtarted, and intreated his new friend not to diſtreſs him ſo very much. He then attempted

attempted to vindicate Charlotte from the aſperſion which Sir Edward had thrown on her, telling him that, though her extreme vivacity might make her appear giddy in the eyes of thoſe who admired women of a more ſerious diſpoſition, it was certainly very innocent in her, and added a thouſand charms to her perſon. I ſhould be very happy, continued he, to bring about, on my mother's account, a reconciliation between her family and my grandfather, but were I to poſſeſs millions, and to be deprived at the ſame time of all hopes of poſſeſſing Miſs Gilmour, I could taſte no joy.

Are you ſo far gone then, my poor Aſtley? cried Sir Edward. Well ſir—I ſhall not diſpute with you either about the beauty or the virtues of your miſ-

treſs: You are a young man, but be pleaſed to conſider, that on your being countenanced by Sir Robert depends your ſucceſs in love, eſpecially with this lady, whoſe father and uncle will never conſent to her being married to you in your preſent ſituation: and indeed, to deſire her marriage with you at this time, will be manifeſtly to injure her: and I believe when you reflect upon what I ſay, you will be of my opinion. No man, continued he with great warmth, can be a more ſtrenuous advocate for diſintereſted love than myſelf, but then, the parties who wiſh to come together muſt have fortune enough between them to ſecure themſelves and their future family from diſtreſs, or elſe they will ſoon become the moſt wretched of human creatures:

and

and more ſo, from their partial attachment to each other. Imagine not, therefore, Mr. Aſtley, that I will connive at any clandeſtine proceedings between you and Miſs Gilmour. On the contrary, I will, this evening, acquaint Mr. Elrington, who is one of the worthieſt of men, with your inclination for his neice.

Surely, Sir Edward, ſaid the alarmed youth, certainly there is no neceſſity for your being ſo very precipitate.—I give you my word and honour, that I will not ſee Miſs Gilmour, dear as ſhe is to my fond heart, till you have taken ſome ſteps towards prevailing on my grand-father to acknowledge me, as you have promiſed ſo generouſly to do.

Would you then, ſaid Sir Edward, have me act in the mean time, the ſhameful part of a hypocrite? would you have me deceive the man for whom I have the higheſt eſteem? under whoſe friendly roof I have been ſo long, ſo hoſpitably entertained? Were I an utter ſtranger to his virtues, I hope I ſhould have a ſtricter regard to integrity than to ſuffer myſelf to conceal any thing from him, (from any man) the ignorance of which might be prejudicial. To be acceſſary to the ſeducement of a child, is I think, to be guilty of a moſt atrocious crime. Miſs Gilmour muſt at preſent be looked upon as a child to Mr. Elrington, as her father has entruſted her to his care. Let me go, therefore, Mr. Aſtley, continued he, finding that he endeavoured

to

to ſtop him—let me go, I have promiſed to do my utmoſt to ſerve you; but I muſt ſerve you in my own way, according to the dictates of honour and conſcience which prevail in my own breaſt, of which no man living can be ſo proper a judge as myſelf.

With theſe words, which were delivered with ſome fierceneſs, he broke from him and returned to the houſe. Young Aſtley lingered back to his mother full of uncertainty and deſpair.

Mrs. Aſtley, though ſhe had of late, often ſeen her ſon return to her rather in a melancholy mood, was greatly troubled at his uncommon dejection. She preſſed him, for ſome time, to tell her the cauſe of it, before he could recover his ſpirits ſo as to relate the

conſequences of his connection with Miſs Gilmour.

When he had finiſhed his narration with a ſigh, which the dread of a too haſty diſcovery of his paſſion had extorted from his boſom, Ah! Charles, Charles, ſaid his unhappy mother, burſting into tears, have I not already met with misfortunes enough in life? Muſt your being alſo engaged in a romantic paſſion, like your wretched parents, ſtill increaſe my miſery? Had your dear father never known me, he might have been happy! and you, poor ill-fated youth, might never have felt the diſtreſs from which neither my continual prayers, nor fondeſt wiſhes can preſerve you.

Poor Aſtley made no verbal reply: he only anſwered with his ſighs, which did

did not at all tend to calm the grief which his mother conſtantly felt when ſhe reflected upon his ſituation and her own. She had, it is true, the ſatisfaction to know that her ſon had, in every reſpect, received an education proper for the heir to Sir Robert Aſtley's title and fortune; ſuch an education his father, though he ſtrained himſelf, and left thereby, the leſs for their ſupport, was determined to give him. But ſhe had alſo the mortification to ſee, that he was in no way to make a proper uſe of his natural or acquired talents, as his father had always flattered himſelf that Sir Robert would be one day reconciled to him.

While they were thus giving way to their griefs, Sir Edward ſat down with Mr. Elrington and his family to

ſupper, of which he ſcarcely partook, as his head and his heart were both too full to permit him to enjoy that ſociable meeting. None of the parties, indeed, met together for that purpoſe, except the good Mr. Elrington, were much more diſpoſed to partake of it than himſelf.

Charlotte ſat biting her lips, with all the marks of diſcontent upon her brow. Myra, who had almoſt left off eating, with her eyes caſt down on her empty plate to avoid looking at Sir Edward, took no notice of any body.

Mr. Weſtbury, who happened to ſpend that evening with them, and whoſe ſpirits were greatly depreſſed, upon his father's account, whoſe ſituation was extremely dangerous, and upon Miſs Belladen's account, who was

apparently

apparently in a very ill ſtate of health, made no other uſe of his tongue than to preſs the latter to taſte a bit of this thing or that thing; and, when ſhe complained of a head-ach that would ſcarce ſuffer her to look up, perſuaded her to have ſome advice.

As the night advanced, he took his leave, and the ladies retired to their reſpective apartments, leaving only Sir Edward and Mr. Elrington together.

Sir Edward acquainted his good friend with every circumſtance about his meeting with Aſtley, and the uſe which he intended to make of it, by firſt writing to Sir Robert, and then, in perſon, perſuading him no longer to refuſe himſelf the ſatisfaction of receiving a grandſon, ſo very worthy of his affection. He is indeed, continued

he, a very pretty young fellow, and I know of no fault he has been guilty of, but falling in love with Miſs Gilmour: if love be a fault, though I cannot think it one Mr. Elrington, when the paſſion is properly placed; but whether Miſs Gilmour is ſerious, or whether ſhe will be ever ſo, it is impoſſible for me to determine. I will do every thing in my power to ſecure a ſuitable fortune to her admirer, and ſhall then leave you and her father, with the conſent of the lady herſelf, to ſettle other things.

Mr. Elrington, charmed with the noble frankneſs of Sir Edward, and the benevolence of his intentions, would ſcarce have ſet bounds to his commendations, had not the baronet wiſhed him a good night in the midſt of his encomiums:

miums: even before he could aſk his advice how to proceed with his neice.

Charlotte, all lively as ſhe was by nature, ſtill more ſo by the life which ſhe had led from her infancy, reflecting upon her lover's perſon and converſation, tenderneſs and reſpect, began to feel an unuſual ſomewhat about her heart which powerfully pleaded in his favour, and which hindered her from cloſing her eyes that night.

She roſe early, and intended to have ſlipped out unobſerved, in order to ſeek him before breakfaſt; but when ſhe was got half way, ſhe was met by Sir Edward.

Whither ſo faſt? Miſs Gilmour, ſaid he to her, with a forced ſmile. You will not meet him this morning. I have taken care to prevent any more

interviews

interviews between you, till his family and yours agree to approve of your proceedings.

That was like Sir Edward Balchen, returned ſhe warmly—I expected no leſs from him; though, really ſir, I am not ſenſible that I have in any ſhape, deſerved this treatment from you: or your moſt injurious ſuppoſition that I have been, or deſign to be guilty of any thing contrary to the approbation of thoſe who have, alone, a right to my obedience. If accident, and only accident firſt threw me in the way of this gentleman, it is equally poſſible for the ſame chance to bring us together again, without my being able to prevent the meeting.

You may poſſibly, Miſs Gilmour, meet together again accidentally—But

if

if you perſiſt in denying that you have often contrived thoſe opportunities, or if, at the moment that your approving friends on both ſides ſhall agree to ratify your mutual deſires, you fly off, and ſwear that you do not love him, and never can, I ſhall perſiſt in aſſerting that you are the moſt conſumate coquette I ever knew: for I do not believe that there is now exiſting in the world a more diabolical character than the woman who ſuffers a worthy, undeſigning young fellow to believe that ſhe likes him, and then, when there is a proſpect of their coming together, declares that ſhe never entertained a ſingle thought about him; and ſo leaves the poor fellow to bite his nails, and give himſelf up to dejection for a

curſed

curſed devil of a jilt who all the while did not care ſixpence for him.

And pray ſir, cried the inflamed Miſs Gilmour, with an affected laugh, ſtop a moment if you pleaſe, while I give you a ſketch of a character parallel to that which you have drawn in ſuch mighty lively colours. What do you think of a man who leaves nothing undone to gain the heart of an amiable girl, though he means nothing but to decoy her out of her reputation and peace, in return for her generoſity and her eſteem for him?

If you mean me, madam, ſaid Sir Edward, by this ſarcaſtic character, be pleaſed to recollect that the lady began firſt, and that I was as totally indifferent to her, as I am at this inſtant, till ſhe made advances which

few

few men, diſengaged, would have overlooked.

As Sir Edward entirely miſtook Miſs Gilmour's meaning here, he was at no loſs for a reply, for he imagined that ſhe hinted at his behaviour to her, when in reality it was Miſs Belladen at whom ſhe glanced. And it is highly probable that they would have continued their converſation in the acrimonious ſtyle, had not a ſervant of Mr. Elrington's came to inform the lady that his maſter deſired to ſee her immediately. She was obliged to comply with the meſſage which ſhe received. As ſhe flung from Sir Edward, ſhe darted a look at him which forcibly expreſſed all the bitterneſs which ſhe had conceived againſt him.

When

When ſhe came to her uncle, he very mildly told her that he was not to be informed of her having gained a lover ſince ſhe had been at Elm-Walk, but told her at the ſame time, that as it was by no means proper to encourage him, however amiable he might be, till he was in a ſituation to make his addreſſes to her: and not even then, till they had both received the ſanction of her father's approbation. I have wrote to your father, continued he, to fetch you home directly, till matters can be properly accommodated between the two families, and I heartily wiſh that they may be accommodated, my dear, to your ſatisfaction and future happineſs.

Charlotte coloured, and drew up a little upon finding that her uncle was ſo

ſo well acquainted with her affairs, and was beginning to excuſe herſelf, by accuſing Sir Edward: but Mr. Elrington, who, ſetting aſide the entire eſteem which he had for that gentleman, could not bear to hear him ſlightly ſpoken of by his niece, when he was at that very inſtant endeavouring to ſerve her to the utmoſt of his power, reproved her with ſo much more ſeverity than he had ever yet done, and talked ſo warmly in praiſe of the baronet, declaring at the ſame time that ſhe did not know what an injury ſhe was doing to one of her ſincereſt friends, that with all her readineſs of apprehenſion, and uſual quickneſs of reply, ſhe was not a little diſconcerted.

The entrance of Sir Edward rendered her more ſo, and ſoon afterwards

the

the breakfaſt put a ſtop to any farther converſation upon that ſubject.

When this neceſſary repaſt was over, when the baronet had left the room, Miſs Gilmour watched his motions, and thought, that if ſhe could but fix him any where, ſhe would juſt ſteal out for a few minutes to Aſtley, and acquaint him with her uncle's behaviour: but as ſhe was on the point of ſetting out, it rained very hard, and did not hold up till Mr. Gilmour arrived in the evening. As Mr. Elrington had diſpatched a ſervant to fetch him, he had travelled with ſome expedition.

Sir Edward having, to avoid any farther altercation with Charlotte, returned to the farm, did not make his appearance at Elm-Walk till after the

the departure of Mr. Gilmour and his daughter. He took this opportunity to call upon Mr. Aſtley, and informed him of the ſteps which he had taken in his favour, aſſuring him that he ſhould ſoon follow the letter he had wrote to Sir Robert, and would make uſe of every perſuaſive argument to prevail on him to receive him and Mr. Aſtley as his children.

The grateful young man, overflowing with the moſt affecting ſenſibility, intreated Sir Edward to let his mother be a witneſs to the friendſhip, the unmerited friendſhip, which he had ſhewn for him.

I was juſt going, ſaid Sir Edward, to make the ſame intreaty: but let me firſt aſſiſt you in making this good parent of yours eaſy in her affairs. So

ſaying,

ſaying, he put bank notes, to the value of five hundred pounds into his hands.

Aſtley ſtarted back at this unexpected piece of generoſity, and ſaid, Hold Sir Edward—do not overwhelm me with favours, which I do not, perhaps, deſerve: and which I may never be able to repay.

We will diſcuſs thoſe points at another time, my friend, replied the baronet ſmiling, oblige me now, and when I aſk any favour which you cannot comply with, refuſe me; I will do the ſame by you—and then we ſhall be upon an equality: but at preſent, conduct me to your mother.

Aſtley, whoſe mind was not leſs generous than Sir Edward's, though fortune had made ſuch a wide difference between them, looked upon him with reverence,

reverence, and, while he preſented his mother to him, told her that an angel from Heaven had deſcended in the ſhape of a friend to him.

This young gentleman, madam, ſaid Sir Edward, has but one fault: and conſidering that I am ſpeaking of a man brought up in the faſhionable way, my aſſertion is rather extraordinary: but it is a true one. He has too romantic notions about love and friendſhip. Time, however, and a more competent knowledge of men and things, will rectify this miſtake, which, as it proceeds entirely from the goodneſs of his own heart, can ſcarce be called a failing: it is indeed almoſt a virtue.

Mrs. Aſtley, who was a woman of exceeding good ſenſe, and who was tranſported to find that her ſon had

gained

gained a friend of ſuch abilities, and ſuch rank in life, was almoſt incapable of framing a proper reply, and was rendered ſtill leſs incapable by her ſon's preſenting the notes to her which he had juſt received from his friend.

As this was in truth a very ſeaſonable relief, it was the more acceptable: but the lady could only thank Sir Edward with her tears. He, perceiving them, ſoon gave a different and chearful turn to the converſation, and thereby left them quite undetermined which to admire moſt, his well-timed generoſity, or his refined politeneſs.

Sir Edward, though he had aſſumed a chearful behaviour while he was with Mrs. Aſtley and her ſon, in order to make them as happy in their hearts as he thought they deſerved to be, when

he

he retired to his private reflections, felt the moſt tormenting pangs, as his own heart was filled with love and Myra.

As Miſs Belladen was ignorant of all that had paſſed between Miſs Gilmour and Mr. Aſtley, ſhe could not help wondering that Sir Edward had been abſent during the whole day, and aſked Mr. Elrington in the evening, whether they ſhould not delay the ſupper for him. Upon his replying that Sir Edward was at Farmer Ford's, the idea of his being ſtruck with the beauties of Patty again, was the leading one in her mind: though ſhe was more than ever convinced that he could be no object for herſelf, ſhe could not bring herſelf to think of his loving another with the compoſure which ſhe wiſhed

to feel. Before ſhe went to reſt, however, that night, the ſervant who generally attended her, and who was related to Mrs. Ford, by accidentally mentioning Sir Edward's having never once ſeen Patty Ford, as ſhe had been with an uncle, in a diſtant part of the country for ſeveral months, infuſed a tranquility into her boſom which ſhe had not for ſome time enjoyed. But as ſoon as ſhe heard that Sir Edward was preparing to leave Elm-Walk, all that tranquility was totally deſtroyed.

Sir Edward ſoon received an anſwer to his letter from Sir Robert, who, though he did not abſolutely agree to receive young Aſtley, did not make ſo many objections as he apprehended. This ſenſible friend, therefore, determined to take the young gentleman to

town

town with him, and to introduce him to his grandfather himſelf. The only difficulty he had to encounter was how to take leave of Myra. He was going to ſeparate himſelf from her, perhaps, for ever; at a juncture too, when her ill-health, and her dejected looks too plainly diſcovered her unhappineſs. He could not bear to be abſent from her before: the thoughts of being ſo now were doubly inſupportable. To ſtay however, and to ſee her in the arms of Weſtbury—that was a reflection too mortifying to be encouraged.

In this dilemma about bidding her adieu, wild with love, but wretched by deſpair, he was retreating from Mr. Aſtley with Fidele behind him. In paſſing a [illegible], a large dog ran out, and ſeized [illegible] poor little animal in

in ſo rough a manner, that Sir Edward, fearing leſt he ſhould be hurt, interpoſed in behalf of Myra's favourite, and in ſo doing received a very ugly bite from the enraged cur, as he had no ſtick for his defence. He drove him off however, and taking up Fidele, walked home with his bleeding hand, as he was within a few yards of Mr. Elrington's.

At the very entrance he met Miſs Belladen, to whom that worthy man had juſt been relating the hiſtory of Miſs Gilmour and Mr. Aſtley, acquainting her with the ſteps which Sir Edward had been taking in favour of the latter, in order to make him a ſuitable match to his niece.

This extreme goodneſs of Sir Edward's heart had [illegible] him, if poſſible,

ble, higher than ever in her eſteem. Imagine then her ſurprize and ſorrow, when ſhe ſaw him come in with his hand all over blood.

She changed colour immediately, and cried, with a faultering voice, Gracious Heaven! — What's the matter? how came you hurt, Sir Edward? You bleed very much: let me bind up your hand till proper help can be procured.

There is no need of any other ſurgeon but yourſelf, my ſweet girl, replied he, penetrated with love, at ſeeing her concern, on hearing her tender expreſſions, and on obſerving with how much anxious readineſs ſhe flew to aſſiſt him. When he had, at her requeſt, ſeated himſelf in the chair which ſtood neareſt to him in the parlour, ſhe threw

herſelf upon her knees, and, taking out of her pocket a white handkerchief, gently wiped the blood from every part and bound it up.

When ſhe had finiſhed this humane office, ſhe lifted up her eyes, ſwimming in tears, to him, and aſked him if it was eaſy, and how he found himſelf.

Never, never ſo out of order, cried Sir Edward, my dear girl, looking at her with the moſt paſſionate tenderneſs. I am now loſt indeed, to ſee thoſe eyes, thoſe lovely eyes ſhed tears for me—'tis too much—too much to ſupport—I could have bore any thing but this, continued he, raiſing her from the ground, and, taking her hand, preſſed it to his breaſt, where he held it, while his eyes were fondly fixed, immoveably upon

upon her face. In that attitude he remained till ſhe, beginning to think that ſhe had diſcovered too much concern, and being filled with the utmoſt uneaſineſs on his account, intreated him to let her go and ſend for a ſurgeon directly.

There is no need of one, cried Sir Edward again, ſtill looking on her in a languiſhing manner, except he can cure the wounds of the heart: but thoſe, even thoſe I would not wiſh—

Myra, without waiting till he had finiſhed his ſpeech, haſtened out of the room, went to Mr. Elrington, and begged him to perſuade Sir Edward to have proper aſſiſtance: but he would, by no means hear of it, ſaying that the hurt was too trifling to acquire any thing farther than Myra's hand-

kerchief, who, finding he perſiſted to oppoſe the perſuaſions of his friend, and her own intreaties, fetched ſome arquebuſade water, and urged him with ſo winning an importunity to let her apply it to his wound, that he immediately conſented to the application of it: but, while he thanked her for her care, in terms which plainly diſcovered the delight which it gave him, he thought, and he ſo thought for the firſt time, that he perceived no ſigns of indifference in her to him. This little accident had, by awakening all her tenderneſs, and all her fears for his ſafety, thrown her off her guard: and though ſhe ſtrove with all her might to conceal her ſenſations, vain were all her efforts. The tender emotions which ſhe felt, when he, tranſported with

with her aſſiduities about him, could not help ſhowing his ſatisfaction by a thouſand little attentions to her, added to the terrors which almoſt overpowered her; while he, dejected to the laſt degree at the thoughts of her ſoon becoming the wife of Weſtbury, under the maſk of illneſs diſguiſed his deſpair, and was made ſenſible, now too late, how much ſhe intereſted herſelf in every thing relating to him.

The preſence of Weſtbury, however, who was frequently with them, kept them both within bounds, eſpecially Myra, who, though ſhe ſuffered extremely by accepting of the addreſſes and aſſiduities of that gentleman, had gone too far to refuſe him all decent liberties.

Sir Edward, who was all obſervation, now ſaw with the moſt bitter regret, the reluctance with which ſhe received Weſtbury's endearments, and imagined that he alſo ſaw her melancholy continually increaſing. Theſe diſcoveries almoſt diſtracted him: and though he had promiſed Aſtley to be in town on a certain day, he knew not how to reſolve upon quitting Miſs Belladen. Hours and hours did he ſpend in forming ſchemes to try if ſhe really preferred him to Weſtbury: determining if he was convinced of that preference, to endeavour to perſuade her to admit his addreſſes, when ſhe found that ſhe could not be happy with the other.

In order to carry his ſchemes into execution, he again ſought all opportunities to ſpeak with her alone: but ſhe,

ſhe, conſcious of the error which ſhe had committed, in diſcovering ſo much ſenſibility upon his account, and being likewiſe afraid to truſt herſelf in private with him, ſhe carefully ſhunned him, while he remained at Elm-Walk, and turned all her attention towards pleaſing her future huſband.

This change in her behaviour immediately induced Sir Edward to believe that he had again been deceived in her, and that he had miſtaken the natural ſoftneſs of her diſpoſition for a particular attachment to him. This belief made him reſolve to bid her farewell for ever; and, after ſo heavy a diſappointment, (for which he could not but own that he ought only to blame himſelf,) to expect no more felicity in his intercourſes with the female

ſex: to give up, in ſhort, the whole ſex, from whom he had hitherto received infinitely more pain than pleaſure.

Theſe reflections ſtrengthened the reſolution which he had made to depart on the following morning: and in order to fill up the remainder of the laſt day at Elm-Walk, he brought Mr. Aſtley, at Mr. Elrington's deſire, to dine with him, who made ſo good a uſe of his time, aſſiſted by Sir Edward's recommendation, that Miſs Gilmour's uncle found him much more agreeable than he expected him to be.

As they were to ſet off early for London, Sir Edward took leave of Mr. Elrington before he retired to reſt, who was extremely loth to part with him,

him, and repeatedly desired him to return as soon as it was in his power.

When he approached Miss Belladen, such a softness invaded his whole soul, that he could scarce bring himself to speak to her, while she, trembling all over, stood as, if he was going to pronounce the sentence of death against her.

At last, after having several times opened his mouth and shut it again, I am going to leave you Miss Belladen, said he: before I see you again, you will in all probability have made Mr. Westbury the happiest of men. I can have but little to say upon a subject which for ever destroys my peace: but if you find felicity in your new state, (and I pray ardently that the great God of Heaven may make you happy

in

in that and in every other,) I muſt not repine.

He then turned haſtily from her, and went out of the room.

Myra, overpowered with the grief which ſhe felt at the loſs of the man for whom ſhe now began to feel her affection increaſe every hour, ſunk down in the chair that was neareſt to her, and gave a free vent to her ſighs and tears, which, from being ſuppreſſed while he ſtaid with her, broke forth with greater violence when ſhe was alone. Both of them paſſed the night without enjoying the ſweets of ſleep.

As ſoon as day began to break, the ſound of the carriage which was to convey from Miſs Belladen all that her ſoul held dear, increaſed her diſtreſs. She roſe, and placed herſelf at the window

window which ſhe could, unobſerved, take a farewell look of him. With her head leaning on her hand, and her face bathed in tears, ſhe ſaw him come out of the houſe and ſtep ſlowly into the chaiſe. He appeared pale, dejected, unrefreſhed. His hair, which was very fine, hung in the greateſt diſorder.

When he had thrown himſelf upon the ſeat, he directed his eyes in a mournful manner to Myra's window, though he did not in the leaſt expect to ſee her there: but how did his heart throb when he beheld her lovely face, no leſs pale than his own, concealed, as he thought, behind the window-ſhutter!

He put out both his head and his hand, and waved an adieu to her, which had all the effect he could deſire—

even

even more than he could have imagined, for, not remembering that ſhe had no intention to be ſeen: remembering only that he was going to leave her for ever, ſhe threw open the window and returned the little compliment he paid her, though in ſo doing he diſcovered the ſorrow with which ſhe was oppreſſed.

The chaiſe drove off with the rapidity of lightning, before either of them had thought about it.

Myra, having ſhut her window, flung herſelf into a chair in the moſt diſtreſſful ſituation. Sir Edward, at the ſame time, loudly exclaimed to himſelf, Oh! God! ſhe weeps, dear lovely girl. Then ſhe is, I fear, unhappy indeed.

He was hardly compoſed enough, when he took up Aſtley, to anſwer the

the gratefnl effuſions of his heart, on his being ſo favourably received at Mr. Elrington's. But when that young gentleman mentioned Miſs Belladen, and ſaid that he thought ſhe was one of the moſt amiable women he had ever ſeen, Sir Edward joined ſo warmly in her praiſes that Aſtley had not the ſlighteſt doubts of his being enamoured with her. As Sir Edward, however, explained himſelf no farther, Aſtley out of reſpect ſeemed to take no notice of what he had heard. When he ceaſed to ſpeak about Miſs Belladen, Sir Edward alſo was ſilent.

Myra engroſſed all Sir Edward's thoughts; he could not account for her having been ſtirring ſo early in the morning, unleſs ſhe roſe ſo long before her uſual hour, in order to ſee him before

before he went. Very much did he blame himſelf for not having ſpoken to her once more. But to what purpoſe ſhould I have ſpoken again to her? ſaid he, ſhe is determined to marry Weſtbury, and I muſt be miſerable.

Poor Myra ſpent the time between Sir Edward's departure and the hour of breakfaſt, in trying to compoſe herſelf, that not the ſmalleſt traces of her ſorrow might be diſcerned, but ſhe proved to be a novice in diſſimulation. Mr. Elrington and Mr. Weſtbury who made her an early viſit that morning, found her extremely low-ſpirited. To conceal the true cauſe of her dejection, too viſible not to be obſerved, ſhe complained of ill-health; and indeed the violence which ſhe offered to her inclination, joined to the departure of Sir Edward,

Edward, ſoon brought on a real diſorder. The tenderneſs which Sir Edward had expreſſed for her, during the latter part of his ſtay at Elm-Walk, had conſiderably improved the prepoſſeſſion which ſhe had ever entertained for him: and though ſhe had no hopes of being his, ſhe would have given the world to have been diſengaged from a man whom, notwithſtanding his agreeableneſs, ſhe had only conſented to marry in compliance with the importunities of her friends.

Theſe uneaſy reflections entirely deprived her of repoſe: and in a ſhort time ſhe loſt her appetite. She grew pale, languid, and emaciated. But tho' the beautiful bloom which uſed to enliven her face was vaniſhed, the languor which ſucceeded it had thrown

ſuch

ſuch a delicacy over her features, that ſhe appeared ſtill a lovely object.

Mr. Weſtbury, who doated on her, became quite uneaſy at the alarming alteration in her looks: while ſhe availed herſelf of that alteration to delay a marriage on which ſhe could not reflect without horror and diſtraction.

Could I but be ſo happy, ſaid ſhe, as to paſs my life free from any attachment, I might, without being guilty of a criminal action, devote all my thoughts to this dear amiable man who entirely engroſſes them. I might then ſpend the reſt of my days in admiring his numberleſs good qualities, his thouſand nameleſs attractions, which I have never yet ſeen equalled. But, ſince even this bleſſing is denied me, happy ſhould I now think myſelf, if merciful Heaven would

would take me out of the world before I give my hand without my heart.

Sir Edward, unhappily-agitated as his mind was, did not ſuffer himſelf in the leaſt to neglect the affairs of young Aſtley, whom he had taken under his protection. Immediately upon his arrival in town, he went to Sir Robert, and gave him a ſtill more particular and more favourable account of his grandſon than he had done in writing; and added, that the luckieſt opportunity in the world now offered of ſettling him for life, as he had gained the heart of a young lady of family and fortune. Her relations, continued Sir Edward, cannot with any prudence agree to ſuch an alliance, till there is ſome eſtabliſhment for the young gentleman,

man, with whom I am ſure you will be pleaſed, if you will give me leave to preſent him to you.

Sir Robert, overcome by his perſuaſive pleadings, conſented at laſt to ſee his grandſon.

Sir Edward then returned to young Aſtley to give him every neceſſary inſtruction, that he might render himſelf agreeable to his grand-father.

So well did young Aſtley ſucceed that, in a ſhort time, by following the inſtructions of his friend, he received orders from Sir Robert to ſend for Mrs. Aſtley up to town, that he might ſettle her in a manner ſuitable to the widow of his ſon. — Sir Robert alſo agreed to allow his grandſon a thouſand a year during his life, and, if Miſs Gilmour's father aſſented to the marriage,

riage, to make a ſettlement on her, proportionable to her fortune, with an additional promiſe to leave every thing to them at his death.

With this commiſſion he charged his ſon Charles, as he now called him, to wait on Mr. Gilmour. But Charles rather choſe to ſee the lady firſt, as her inclination, of which he was not quite ſure, as he wiſhed to be, were only wanting to complete his happineſs.

From the time young Aſtley came to town, he had not attempted to ſee Miſs Gilmour: not even to write to her; becauſe he would not take any ſtep which he thought might be condemned by his family: and becauſe he ſincerely wiſhed to be certain that his paſſion for her was with equal ardor returned.

Miſs

Miſs Gilmour was indeed as ſenſible of Aſtley's merit as ſhe could poſſibly be, but, doubtleſs, would have preferred Sir Edward Balchen to him, if he had been in love with her. As he was not, and as ſhe ſaw plainly that he never would be, Aſtley poſſeſſed the ſecond place in her heart; and he really in that heart reigned triumphant over all *other* men. But as ſhe was naturally volatile, fond of pleaſure, and bewitched with admiration, to which ſhe had from her cradle been accuſtomed, ſhe was not ſo ſoon nor ſo entirely ſubdued by an affection which formed the whole happineſs or miſery of a heart more diſpoſed to indulge the tender paſſions.

Charles Aſtley was of this gentle, this amorous diſpoſition too: and ſo truly enamoured

enamoured was he with Miſs Gilmour, that he had no idea of enjoying life without her. He therefore, after having adorned his perſon, which was truly elegant, to the greateſt advantage, threw himſelf into a chair, and, preceded by a ſervant, paid a morning viſit to Miſs Gilmour.

The lady happened to be alone. After ſhe had made her woman repeat the name of Aſtley three or four times, before ſhe thought proper to underſtand her, ſhe ſaid, at laſt, that he might be admitted.

Between the delivery of the meſſage and his appearance, ſhe was ſtudying how ſhe ſhould receive him.

At the very firſt ſight of him ſhe was diſconcerted; as his figure and his dreſs ſo infinitely exceeded her expec-

tations. She had never ſeen him but in the plaineſt cloaths. The faſhionable colour of his frock, together with its trimming, the fine point ruffles which hung gracefully over his hands, which were uncommonly white, and the air of his head perfectly in taſte, all united, gave her a ſurprize which ſhe could not conceal. Being however well experienced in the art of diſſimulation, ſhe affected aſtoniſhment at ſeeing him, and aſked him what he imagined her father would think of her, when he had but juſt hurried her to town in order to be out of his way.

I have every thing to hope from Mr. Gilmour, madam, ſaid he with an humble, diſconcerted air, as Sir Robert will permit me to make any offer that he may approve of, if I am but happy enough

enough to gain your approbation. And if all my tendereſt, moſt reſpectful aſſiduities can make no impreſſion upon you, neither my grand-father's affection or fortune will give me any felicity. Without my ever-admired Charlotte, there is no felicity for me in this world.

And ſo, Sir Robert actually looks upon you as one ſo nearly related to him? Lord, you are vaſtly fortunate Mr. Aſtley: I am extremely glad to hear of it.

I can never conſider myſelf as fortunate, Miſs Gilmour, unleſs you will condeſcend to bleſs me with the poſſeſſion of your heart.

Well now, I proteſt, that's rather odd in you, to ſuppoſe that, becauſe I amuſed myſelf with you, meerly to divert the

ſolitude of the country, and becauſe we happened to meet by accident, I meant any thing. Why, I was never ſerious in my life. And ſo, becauſe Sir Edward Balchen ſaw us careleſsly ſitting under a tree, he goes and tells my uncle Elrington, who writes directly to my father: down comes he, and up he whirls me to town, as if you and I had intended to be guilty of ſome frightful miſdemeanour: while we, poor innocent ſouls, had not the leaſt deſign to do ourſelves or any body elſe, any miſchief. Upon my word, I am vaſtly obliged to Sir Edward though, for it has given me a ſight of the town ſooner than my dear father deſigned that I ſhould ſee it.

Poor Aſtley, not a little confounded at this very cavalier reception, was conſidering

ſidering what he ſhould ſay to her next, when her mentioning Sir Edward, to whom he was indebted for every thing, rouzed him enough to reply, that Sir Edward Balchen was the moſt generous, the moſt friendly of men: and that it was entirely owing to his kind interceſſion with Sir Robert, that he was in a ſituation to make propoſals to Mr. Gilmour. Propoſals, madam, continued he, I have poſitive orders from him, to make to your father, but, notwithſtanding the extreme indifference with which you treat me, I have too delicate a paſſion for you to be ſatisfied with the poſſeſſion of your hand, without the concurrence of your heart. If I have no hopes of the latter, I ſhall make no attempts to ſee Mr. Gilmour, as I would by no means take any ſteps

which ſhould induce that gentleman to wiſh to force your compliance.

Force my compliance? Heavens! cried Miſs Gilmour, and do you ſuppoſe ſir, that your perſon, and Sir Robert's fortune are of conſequence enough to make my father think it neceſſary to force his daughter to accept of them? Force me? upon my word, you have a very pretty method of delivering your ſentiments, and they will, no doubt, have a wonderful effect upon me.

She was proceeding with a diſdainful air, and at the ſame time with a ſpirit which animated her countenance, and heightened her beauty, when the announcing of Lady Amſbury, who immediately entered, put a ſtop to the vehemence of her expreſſions.

Lady

Lady Amſbury had been, when very young, admired for her perſon, but the preſent mode of life among people of diſtinction, had ſo far contributed to alter it, that ſhe was now only agreeable. A ſickly paleneſs overſpread her face, once blooming: but though the brilliancy of her complexion was deadened, there was great delicacy in it. She was alſo genteel, and thoroughly well-bred.

As Aſtley had all the outward lines of a man of faſhion, her ladyſhip treated him accordingly while he ſtaid: he did not ſtay long after her entrance. Shocked at the reception which he had met with from Miſs Gilmour, unhappy too, he ſoon took his leave, naturally enough imagining that, as ſhe had treated him ſo contemptuouſly when they

were alone, ſhe would not behave with leſs haughtineſs before a third perſon. He therefore withdrew.

As ſoon as he had left the room, Lady Amſbury ſaid, I am afraid, Charlotte, that I have called upon you this morning at an improper hour. My preſence ſeems to have deprived you of your viſitor. He is a very pretty fellow.

Do you think ſo? replied Charlotte. I was juſt conſidering when your ladyſhip came in, whether he was ſo or not. He has, I confeſs, not pleaſed me to-day: he ſeemed to think that he was ſure of me, and therefore I drew up upon it; and he has, you ſee, taken himſelf away.

Well, but you don't intend to let him go, do you?

Indeed,

Indeed, I can't tell. What would you adviſe, my lady?

I am not able to give my opinion in an affair, with which I am unacquainted: beſides, my head is entirely engaged by my own ſituation. Do you know, Charlotte, that I have loſt every thing? that I am actually ruined? and that we can ſtay no longer in town? My lord has been juſt telling me to prepare to go down to Amſbury-Park, which I never ſaw, you know. We have been married but five years, and my lord's father has not been dead above two, ſo that we have ſcarce had time to viſit that antient manſion.

I am ſorry you are going to it at this juncture, my lady, for to tell you the truth I want your ladyſhip's company in town. I came but the other

day from the very ſpot, for it ſtands near my uncle Elrington's, and aſſure you that you will paſs your time very ſtupidly there, for it is a horrid dull place.

Then my dear Gilmour, do an act of charity, and go with me.

Oh! I can't, I can't, cried Miſs Gilmour, I deteſt, I abhor the country, I have had ſuch a ſurfeit of it. But do you go alone?

Not abſolutely. We ſhall have my lord's ſiſter down with us, for her aunt is dead: and as it will be impoſſible for his lordſhip to pay her her fortune, we muſt keep her till ſhe can get ſomebody elſe to do it. Don't you think that we three ſhall be precious company to each other? Harriot is one of your ſerious girls, ſhe appears,

at

at leaſt, to be ſo to me, who have not indeed ſeen enough of her, as ſhe lived always with her aunt, to know much of her diſpoſition. I ſhould be very glad of a girl of your chearful humour to enliven our rural ſcenes. But I ſee the reaſon why you will not be of our party: you have a kind of hankering after this lover, whom I unluckily drove away. If you like him, you had better take him: if my lord and I were lovers, now, this country ſcheme would not appear ſo formidable: one might poſſibly amuſe one's ſelf then, for a few months.

That's but a mighty ſhort time to be happy in, cried Miſs Gilmour. Does love laſt no longer after marriage, my lady?

Ah! child, replied her ladyſhip, I fear it ſeldom continues ſo long: but indeed I never experienced it; for my lord and I came together meerly out of obedience to our relations, who thought it a prudent match. He, tranſported to have an independent fortune, that he might live like the reſt of his acquaintance, that is, play deep, keep girls and run horſes. I, delighted to emerge from under the wing of my governeſs, to be the uncontrouled miſtreſs of my time and actions; to laugh, to chat, to play where-ever, and with whom-ever I pleaſed: in ſhort, to fear nothing, and to care for nobody. We have now both purſued our different plans, till we are pretty well tired of them: but having found nothing in each other, nor in any body elſe, (at leaſt

leaſt I'll anſwer for myſelf) that we can ſubſtitute in the room of them, and having loſt our fortune, in gratifying our taſte, we muſt ſit down in obſcurity, and linger out the remainder of our lives in regretting what, when we poſſeſt it, gave us no pleaſure, no real ſatisfaction: and in ſighing after ſomething which may perhaps only exiſt in our imaginations.

You certainly give a moſt inviting deſcription of your ſituation.

It is I fear too juſt a one: but ſince it is not to be bettered, and ſince you will not go with us, to improve us a little, tell me what kind of ſociety I am to expect.

Why no ſociety at all—no creatures that can be called ſociable. Elm-Walk is the neareſt place to Amſbury-Park: but

but Mr. Elrington's infirmities prevent him from being either agreeable or troubleſome to his neighbours; and his fair houſe-keeper, Myra Belladen, will, I ſuppoſe, be married before your ladyſhip gets down. She is a country-gentleman's daughter, all ſoft, ſighing, and bluſhing, and I ſuſpect, over head and ears in love with Sir Edward Balchen, who is alſo half mad for her; but as he does not chuſe to purchaſe her at ſo high a price as marriage, he muſt, I preſume, leave her to her honourable lover Mr. Weſtbury, a good worthy ſort of man enough.

I know Sir Edward Balchen very well—There is a man now, Charlotte, ſo every way deſirable—

Ay, my lady, a ſweet fellow, is he not? Such a figure! ſuch eyes! ſuch hair!

hair! ſuch teeth! every thing in ſhort. But then theſe dangerous men are ſo inſolent and aſſuming, that—

Indeed? I never heard that inſolence was attributed to him. I confeſs that I do not know who has leſs of the coxcomb in him.

The running in of three or four additional morning viſitors interrupted her ladyſhip in this part of her converſation, and did not leave Miſs Gilmour leiſure to think of Mr. Aſtley till the day was pretty far advanced, and then, a ſucceſſion of different amuſements, and a variety of ideas which they occaſioned, baniſhed him for ſome time from her mind.

As for the young gentleman, diſconcerted and diſquieted as he was with his reception, he went to Sir Edward directly,

directly, and related to him circumſtantially Miſs Gilmour's extraordinary behaviour.

Sir Edward, who was no admirer of that lady, earneſtly adviſed his young friend to think no more about ſo capricious a woman, and painted, in ſuch ſtrong colours, the unhappineſs which he would certainly entail upon himſelf for ever, if he truckled to her pride and vanity, that, in ſpite of the influence of her charms, the young lover ſeemed to have a violent deſire to give her up. Yet, when he reflected upon the ſoftneſs with which ſhe received his aſſiduities when he was in the country, and on the various beauties of her perſon, together with the agreeable ſprightlineſs of her temper, he was ready to relapſe into all the languor of his former

mer ſituation: from which however he was immediately rouzed, by hearing that Sir Robert had been ſuddenly taken ſpeechleſs.

He flew to his grandfather with the moſt affectionate gratitude for the kindneſs with which he had received him, and with which he had acknowledged him for his grandſon and heir: but the old gentleman was only capable of ſhewing the ſenſe he had of his dutiful behaviour by a few ſignificant ſigns. Soon afterwards he expired, leaving young Aſtley, now Sir Charles, with about four thouſand a year.

Scarcely was all proper reſpect paid to the memory of Sir Robert, when Mrs. Aſtley fell ill: her diſorder was a lingering one, as ſhe had not received any benefit from the preſcriptions of the

the phyſicians who attended her, ſhe fancied that a return to the neighbourhood of the place which ſhe had quitted, at the requeſt of Sir Robert, would be far more efficacious than the medicines which ſhe had taken: ſhe, therefore, deſired her ſon to look out for a convenient houſe in that part of the country. He, ever-affectionate and tenderly concerned for his mother, though ſtill wretched on Miſs Gilmour's account, immediately ſet out for H—ſhire; and in a very ſhort time, having met with a ſituation which he thought would be perfectly agreeable to his mother, he ſoon conducted her to it, and ſhut himſelf up with her in that retirement, as Miſs Gilmour's behaviour to him had given him an entire diſguſt to every thing.

While

While he was thus ſecluded from the world, incapable of enjoying the gifts which fortune had liberally ſhowered upon him, Miſs Gilmour had time to conſider that Sir Charles Aſtley, with four thouſand a year, was no contemptible lover; and began to be ſurprized that ſhe had made ſo ſlight an impreſſion upon him, as to occaſion his being diſinclined to pay her one more viſit. She conſidered, and reconſidered, that he was young, that he was amiable, and that he had ever appeared to be of a gentle, complying diſpoſition: the moſt deſirable diſpoſition in the world in a huſband: and ſhe at length imputed his abſence entirely to her behaviour to him the laſt morning he was with her. She imagined that, if ſhe could but bring herſelf to make a few advances,

advances, her buſineſs might eaſily be done. But the difficulty was how to manage them properly. She had not ſeen him at any public place whatever, and was, for a conſiderable time, at a loſs to know what courſe to purſue, in order to lure him back again. She happened to have no connections with any perſon who was acquainted with him, but Sir Edward Balchen: and ſhe conjectured that the diſtance which Sir Charles kept, was entirely owing to his inſtructions, who, ſhe knew, was no friend to her caprices. At laſt, ſhe determined to ſend a card to Sir Charles, which would, ſhe doubted not, produce a perſonal anſwer directly.

"Miſs Gilmour's compliments to Sir Charles Aſtley: imagines he might be under a miſtake when ſhe had the pleaſure

pleaſure of ſeeing him, and believes that it may be in her power to rectify it, if he will call upon her when he has a leiſure moment."

When her ſervant, who was ordered to wait for an anſwer, ſent up this card, Sir Edward Balchen happened accidentally to call at Sir Charles's apartments.

When Sir Charles's man had received it, he put it into the hands of Sir Edward. What muſt I do with it ſir? ſaid he.

It requires no anſwer, replied Sir Edward, throwing it upon the table.

Down went Sir Charles's ſervant with this anſwer to Miſs Gilmour's (without mentioning Sir Edward's name) who very carefully conveyed it to his lady.

Charlotte

Charlotte was rather aſtoniſhed at this reply to her civility: but ſuppoſed that ſhe ſhould ſee him directly, and that his eagerneſs to fly to her would not permit him to ſpare time to write an anſwer. In this belief, ſhe waited at home all that day; but, towards the cloſe of it, began to diſcover ſtrong ſigns of impatience and diſappointment.

She rung the bell every half hour, to queſtion her ſervant whom he ſaw at Sir Charles's; whether his man ſaid that he was abroad or at home, in town or in the country, but could not procure the leaſt ſatisfactory reply to her interrogations.

At laſt, growing quite out of humour with the fellow, for not being able to give her the wiſhed-for information, ſhe

ſhe ſent him to enquire where Sir Charles was, and was ſoon afterwards informed by him that Sir Charles was out of town.

She was ſurprized a little: but, as her ſervant did not ſay that he had been ſo for ſome days, ſhe thought that he had received her card, had returned that contemptuous anſwer before-mentioned, and had left London, determined to ſee her no more.

Provoked at this treatment, ſhe at firſt reſolved to think no more about him, but in a very ſhort time ſhe was convinced that he really had made a deeper impreſſion upon her than ſhe could have imagined: though ſhe was willing to impute the deſire ſhe had to renew her acquaintance with him, to the mortification it gave her pride to

let

let a man, whom ſhe had looked upon rather an inſignificant conqueſt, eſcape her.

During theſe diſagreeable reflections, Lady Amſbury came to take leave of her.

Miſs Gilmour's head was now full of nothing but Aſtley; ſhe was, however, too much piqued to mention the treatment which ſhe had received from him, and her ladyſhip left her without making any preſſing invitations to ſpend ſome time with her at Amſbury-Park.

Sir Edward had thus given, almoſt inadvertently, a great deal of vexation to Miſs Gilmour: and was, at the ſame time, to the laſt degree unhappy himſelf. The ſorrowing appearance which Miſs Belladen made upon his leaving Elm-Walk: the tender concern with which

which ſhe dreſſed and wept over his wounded hand, pained him ſeverely on being recollected. He had carefully preſerved the handkerchief which ſhe employed in his ſervice. She never had aſked for it, and if ſhe had, he would not have been able to part with ſo pleaſing a proof of her tender regard for him. That handkerchief was, indeed, a great conſolation to him in his preſent ſtate of mind; he always carried it about him: but with that, he always carried about him too a lively remembrance of all her engaging beauties, all her amiable qualities, unhappily aſſured that they would ſoon be in the poſſeſſion of another.

This bitter remembrance almoſt drove him to madneſs. Moſt of his acquaintance were ſtill in town: and they, unin-

tentionally increaſed his diſtreſs by continually preſſing him to be upon parties with them: they would not let him ſtay at home by himſelf. He was warmly urged by Mr. Weſtbury to go down to the Abbey: but tho' his former reaſon for not going thither no longer ſubſiſted, as the beauties of the once-admired Lucy had long given place to the more ſeducing lovelineſs of Myra, (to whom he now found himſelf, in ſpite of his hopeleſs ſituation, more attached than ever) yet he was too dejected, too ſpiritleſs to fall in with the chearful ſcenes which he muſt have hourly beheld in that happy family.

Where then to place himſelf he could not tell. He had once a ſtrong inclination to go to his own eſtate in D——ſhire: but that was at too great a diſtance,

diſtance, and he would have been thereby liable to the intruſion of the neighbouring gentlemen. Beſides, he could not, by ſo doing, ſo frequently hear from Mr. Elrington, who, he flattered himſelf, would ſometimes write to him, and ſometimes mention Myra. Reaſon, 'tis true, prompted him to forget her, but love compelled him to reflect upon the ſcenes which had paſſed between them with the moſt torturing tenderneſs.

After many doubts and ſtruggles, and much irreſolution, however, he ordered his ſervant to take lodgings for him in a ſmall, and very retired village near London, and gave directions to the ſervants at his houſe in town to ſay that he was in the country to every body, as only Mr. Elrington and Mr.

Wentworth knew the place to which he had retreated.

Here, as it was a pleaſant rural place, he gave himſelf up to his own melancholy reflections. He minutely examined the news-papers every day, all of which were brought to him, that he might ſee if he could diſcover the dreaded marriage of his beloved Myra. Though he expected that Mr. Elrington would certainly inform him of ſo material a tranſaction in his family, he could not help ſearching for the publication of it. With trembling he ſearched, but luckily ſearched in vain.

The elder Mr. Weſtbury, who had for a long time been in a very lingering condition, died about a fortnight after Sir Edward left Elm-Walk.

As

As ſoon as his filial duties were paid, young Weſtbury would have made preparations for his marriage: but Miſs Belladen was taken ſo extremely ill that there was no poſſibility of thinking about it.

This event greatly diſtreſſed every body but her brother, who would, on any terms have been glad to ſee a marriage ſet aſide which he thought prejudicial to his intereſt: and had, indeed, as artfully as he could, endeavoured to inſinuate to his wife's father, that his ſiſter, though a good girl, was by no means ſuitable to his ſon: but as the old gentleman, though naturally very much addicted to avarice, happened to be fonder of his ſon than of his money, who had ever been his favourite; and as he was ſenſible that he was juſt

going out of the world, and had found that all his fortune would not preſerve his life, or adminiſter eaſe to his ſufferings, he received theſe hints from Harry Belladen only as affirmations that he had no hand in promoting the match. He therefore paid little regard but to the lover of Myra, who was ſo warm in her praiſe, and ſo eager to become poſſeſt of her, that his father who ſcarce knew any joy but in ſeeing him happy, gave his free conſent.

Myra, whoſe illneſs was occaſioned by the uneaſineſs under which her mind had long laboured, recovered at length, but recovered very ſlowly: and though ſhe was in a manner ſnatched from the jaws of death by her youth, and the ſtrength of her conſtitution; yet a lingering diſorder ſtill hung about her, which

neither

neither the ſkill of the phyſicians nor the aſſiduities of her lover could remove: to the aſſiduities of the latter, indeed, her diſorder was chiefly owing, as ſhe reflected upon her approaching nuptials with the utmoſt horror.

She was in this low way one Sunday morning at church, where Lady Amſbury, for the firſt time, happened to be. A ſmart ſhower, when the ſervice was over, prevented her from going home.

It has been already ſaid that Mr. Elrington kept no carriage. She was waiting in the porch while the ſervant who attended her went to fetch her cloak, &c.

Lady Amſbury, who ſtood in the porch alſo, in order to be ready for her coach, ſeeing the genteel appear-

ance which Miſs Belladen made, and obſerving ſomething very pleaſing in her, politely aſked her if ſhe ſhould ſet her down.

Myra accepted her ladyſhip's offer, with a modeſt apology, who ordered her ſervants to Elm-Walk, where the carriage ſtopped. Finding ſhe was not unknown to the lady from whom ſhe had received this piece of politeneſs, after ſhe had made her reſpectful acknowledgments, ventured to add, that if, for the ſake of variety, a view of Elm-Walk and its environs would be agreeable, ſhe would at any time think herſelf honoured by waiting on her ladyſhip about the park and gardens.

Lady Amſbury, who was pleaſed with this little mark of Myra's acknowledgment, and the grateful manner in which

which ſhe expreſſed herſelf, thanked her, and with a ſmile told her that ſhe muſt ſet an example by coming firſt to Amſbury-Park.

Miſs Belladen, though ſhe was neither in health nor ſpirits to make a new acquaintance, and was, eſpecially, at that time, unfit to endure the conſtraint under which young women in her ſituation are generally obliged to be with thoſe who are of a ſuperior rank in life, could not well refuſe this offered civility without giving offence: ſhe conſulted both Mr. Elrington and Mr. Weſtbury upon the occaſion, and they both agreed that it was highly proper ſhe ſhould wait on my lady.

She did ſo. Lady Amſbury, who was really a woman of ſenſe and taſte, and whoſe failings aroſe chiefly from

an indiſcreet education, and a too vehement deſire to act like the reſt of the world, ſoon diſcovered charms in Miſs Belladen's converſation and manners, which not only won her ſincere eſteem, but made her very much pleaſed with her company.

Myra's joys, if ſhe had any at that time, lay in a very narrow compaſs: ſhe only indeed felt any joyful ſenſations when ſhe reflected, as ſhe ſometimes did, that ſhe was beloved by Sir Edward. Senſations ſo different from thoſe which would probably ariſe from the engagements into which ſhe was going to enter, when her health permitted, that ſhe dared not even allow herſelf to think of them with the ſmalleſt ſatisfaction. She was, therefore, not averſe now and then to company, that

ſhe

ſhe might endeavour, by varied converſation, to put thoſe engagements out of her head. Lord and Lady Amſbury were not leſs pleaſed in finding ſo amiable and ſo ſenſible a companion, in a place where they did not in the leaſt expect to find one.

Myra indeed was quite a new character to them: for though ſhe wanted the life and ſprightlineſs of a woman of the world, ſhe had, when in tolerable ſpirits, all the politeneſs and agreeableneſs of one. Beſides, the innocent ſimplicity of her manners, and her delicate, unaffected ſenſibility, had charms with which they had been perfectly unacquainted: but ſo much were they delighted with thoſe charms that they never were ſo happy as when they

could prevail upon Miſs Belladen to be of their parties.

That Myra might make fewer objections to their parties, Lord and Lady Amſbury deſired Mr. Weſtbury's company alſo, as they were entirely ignorant of his not being ſo agreeable to her as he wiſhed to be. Not that he ever ſuſpected that ſhe preferred any other perſon, though he plainly ſaw that none of his aſſiduities nor endearments were received with the pleaſure and ſatisfaction which he expected, as their union was ſo near. He knew that ſhe had with great difficulty conſented to become his, but he flattered himſelf, nevertheleſs, that when ſhe had ſo conſented, ſhe would no longer ſhew any repugnance to him. He found himſelf, however, diſappointed: all his

moſt

moſt earneſt endeavours to move her heart, did not gain a ſingle look in return. What, therefore, he at firſt attributed to natural baſhfulneſs, he began to fear was a total want of love.

Whenever theſe diſagreeable reflections diſturbed the peace of Weſtbury's mind, as they frequently did, he ſighed: eſpecially as Lord Amſbury ſometimes rallied both him and Miſs Belladen, tho' with much politeneſs, upon the coolneſs of their behaviour, when they were ſo near the fruition of their happineſs.

My lord diſcovered the utmoſt aſtoniſhment to ſee a man, young, and ſo ſuſceptible of love as to take a girl entirely for herſelf, one who ſo truly deſerved to be choſen for the beauties of her perſon, behave to her with ſo rigid

rigid a reſerve. But he ſoon found out the cauſe of his error, if it was an error. He perceived that Miſs Belladen kept her lover at ſo great a diſtance, entirely by her carriage to him, and began alſo, as well as Weſtbury himſelf, to think that he was by no means the man of her choice. Weſtbury indeed had made uſe of every perſuaſive argument in his power, every tender argument which love could dictate to prevail on her to bleſs him with the appointment of an early day; but ſhe as conſtantly, and as forcibly pleaded her want of health, and beſought him in ſo gentle, ſo eloquent a manner to let her recover, to permit her to get well, adding that ſhe could then have no objections; that ſhe would then be his,

that

that he was not able to reſiſt her ſoft, her earneſt intreaties.

While Myra was thus making efforts to ſave herſelf from a marriage, againſt which her inclination revolted, and from which ſhe expected nothing but miſery, Lord Amſbury, by ſeeing her ſo frequently, and by diſcovering every time new beauties in her, began to feel for her, what he had yet felt for no woman: but as he was quite ſenſible of his paſſion, he was alſo ſenſible of the impropriety of it: there being a double engagement to preclude any poſſibility of ſucceſs. He therefore, concealed his ſentiments carefully in his own breaſt, though he could not by any means bring himſelf to give up the pleaſure of ſeeing her.

Lord

Lord Amſbury had alſo made a ſlight acquaintance with Sir Charles Aſtley, whoſe mother's houſe was not far diſtant.

As they had occaſionally met in their rides, my lord had invited Sir Charles to Amſbury-Park, and Sir Charles had accepted of his lordſhip's invitation: and finding there always agreeable company, which ſerved to diſſipate his melancholy ideas, he ſoon made his viſits at that place pretty frequent.

Sir Charles alſo paid his reſpects to Mr. Elrington, and when that gentleman expreſſed ſome curioſity to know upon what terms he was with Miſs Gilmour, he replied with a deep ſigh, that he had been ſo unfortunate as not to prove agreeable to her.

As

As Myra knew that this was no ſecret, ſhe freely communicated it to Lady Amſbury, upon her aſking if ſhe knew the cauſe of Sir Charles's melancholy, who, giving her a pat on the ſhoulder ſaid, You are a very unaccountable ſet of lovers I think.

As Miſs Amſbury was preſent, when her ſiſter received this piece of intelligence, ſhe found herſelf ſeized with an unuſual flow of compaſſion at the bare mention of the baronet's diſappointment, whom ſhe had before diſcovered to be a mighty agreeable man. She therefore undertook to adminiſter conſolation to him.

Miſs Amſbury was not ungenteel: ſhe had a nameleſs ſomething which rendered her a pleaſing object. She had too good a heart to attempt to draw

draw in a young fellow to marry her: but ſhe would have been very glad to be my Lady Aſtley.

As ſhe was ſo well inclined to Sir Charles, ſhe inadvertently paid more attention to him than ſhe did to any other man: and endeavoured, by a thouſand little obliging ways, to remove, or at leaſt to leſſen, his dejection.

Sir Charles was not at firſt diſpoſed to take notice of this partiality in his favour, but he at length began to receive a kind of pleaſure from it: it amuſed him, it diverted his thoughts from an object which had engroſſed them too much for his peace. He chatted, he trifled with Harriot without being particularly affected: but by being ſo continually in her company, and diverted with the different mothods

which

which ſhe ingeniouſly contrived to attract his notice, he, in his turn ſought interviews with her, and they ſoon appeared to be never ſo well-pleaſed as when they were converſing together: and this inclination for each other's ſociety imperceptibly increaſed, becauſe they were for ſome time left quite unobſerved.

As Lord Amſbury's inclination for Miſs Belladen grew every hour ſtronger and ſtronger, he was entirely employed in endeavouring to conceal it: my lady was taken up in obſerving the progreſs of this paſſion, as was Myra in ſeeming not to ſee what, in ſpite of all his lordſhip's precautions, began to appear but too plainly: while Weſtbury, who began to grow quite uneaſy at the perpetual delays to his happineſs, paid no

regard

regard to any thing but the trying by every method to ſoften the heart of his miſtreſs in his favour.

As ſoon as Myra was aſſured, by a thouſand little inadvertencies, that my lord admired her, or at leaſt pretended to do ſo, ſhe prudently determined to make her viſits leſs frequent to Amſbury-Park; thinking that, if ſhe ſuddenly ceaſed from going thither, ſhe might give his lordſhip reaſon to believe that his deſigns were diſcovered by her. Her delicacy would not let her behave ſo as to let him ſee that ſhe even ſuſpected him of having any againſt her.

She ſtaid away, during a whole week, at the end of which, when my lady ſent the moſt preſſing invitations to her, ſhe pleaded want of health to apologize for not accepting of them; and indeed,

deed, ſhe began to be in a declining way: ſhe had many ſymptoms of an approaching atrophy. But this diſorder, inſtead of rendering her diſagreeable in her perſon, added new charms to it: as the pale bluſh upon her cheek, the conſtant attendant on a hectic, made the natural whiteneſs of her ſkin more tranſparent: and the weakneſs which ſucceeded a continual want of appetite gave her an air irreſiſtibly languiſhing: ſhe, therefore, was not thought to be ſo ill as ſhe really was.

Lady Amſbury, who felt a ſincere friendſhip for her, ſaid to her one day, after having tried in vain to prevail on her to accompany them on a party of pleaſure, I am not ignorant of the reaſon of your refuſing me, Myra, tho' you ſo prettily diſguiſe it. I ſee, I admire

mire your diſcretion. Lord Amſbury is in love with you, Miſs Belladen, and I can neither wonder at his being ſo, nor blame him.

Myra, with an innocent bluſh, which gave her new attractions in the eyes of her friend, deſired her ladyſhip to do herſelf more juſtice than to believe any thing ſo injurious to my lord.

I am right, notwithſtanding, in my conjectures my dear, replied my lady, with a kind of half-ſtifled ſigh: but do not miſtake me, Myra, I am not tormented that my lord has found out that power of charming which you poſſeſs in ſo eminent a degree. Your engagements, and were you not engaged, your innate goodneſs, would I am ſure preſerve you from being ſeduced by him: but I am beyond meaſure afflicted to find

find that I never was poſſeſſed of perſonal allurements, or indeed any other, ſufficient to make my lord's heart feel that tenderneſs for me, which he can, I ſee, feel, when he meets with a proper object. You will, perhaps, be ſurprized, Miſs Belladen, to hear me, who have been married above five years, tell you that neither my huſband nor myſelf ever felt any of that ſatisfaction which ariſes from an union of minds: we were married by our parents from motives of convenience to them, and from a mutual deſire of being independent ourſelves. And I will freely confeſs to you that it is but very lately that I have had any idea of a paſſion which I now perceive makes my lord's life ſo unhappy, becauſe it is placed on a perſon by whom it can never be returned.

My

My lady, by her mild and affecting manner of thus opening her heart to Miſs Belladen, not only conſiderably engaged her attention, but greatly excited her compaſſion, and threw her into a train of reflections upon the miſeries which are derived from a forced marriage, and the certain unhappineſs of thoſe who come together without feeling that affection for each other which is ſo abſolutely neceſſary to make the marriage ſtate a ſtate of tolerable felicity. Theſe reflections naturally raiſed others upon her own unhappy proſpects: but as ſhe could draw no relief from them, ſhe endeavoured to baniſh them for a moment, while ſhe conſidered the ſituation of my lady's mind, who did not appear to enjoy more felicity than herſelf.

END *of* BOOK III.

THE HISTORY OF Sir EDWARD BALCHEN, Bart.

BOOK IV.

LADY Amſbury had been a very fine woman: ſhe was ſtill young, amiable, and agreeable. After a ſhort but affecting ſilence, Myra, whoſe ſympathizing heart ecchoed back all the ſighs of her friend, ſaid to her, I wiſh

it was in my power, moſt ſincerely do I wiſh it was, to offer any kind of relief to your ladyſhip, but no relief can I think of at preſent: I can only prevent the increaſe of your uneaſineſs by ſtaying away from Amſbury-Park.

My dear Myra, my dear good girl, ſaid Lady Amſbury, I believe you are the beſt creature in the world, or elſe I ſhould not have ventured to diſcloſe my ſentiments ſo freely to you: nor would I truſt any woman upon earth but yourſelf, with a ſcheme which I have formed: but there is ſuch a winning ingenuity in your countenance, ſuch an amiable ſincerity in your manners, you have alſo ſo good an underſtanding, and ſuch nice ſenſibility, that from the firſt momeut of my acquaintance with you, I longed either to find, or to

make

make you my friend. It is by that friendſhip in you alone that I hope ſtill to be made happy. You muſt not, therefore, deprive me of your company. You muſt ſee me as often as ever: for I muſt ſteal from you thoſe enchanting graces which have found a way to touch his lordſhip's heart. Nay more, my dear, you muſt ſee my lord, you muſt liſten to him, and, in return, you muſt talk to him, and try if there are no hopes for me to ſupplant you one day, in his affections. It is, you will ſay, a very great preſumption in me to think in this manner: nor indeed, do I dare flatter myſelf with ſucceſs; but it is certainly worth my while to make an effort. My lord is agreeable; and if I could but transfer his love for you to myſelf, we might both be happy.

The retirement in which we are obliged to live, would be no longer irkſome: it would, on the contrary, be a paradiſe, as we ſhould be all the world to each other; we ſhould entirely loſe all reliſh for thoſe pleaſures which every creature in town runs after with avidity, meerly becauſe they are tired of themſelves; we ſhould, by this means, in a ſhort time, retrieve our affairs, and, by being perfectly attached to each other, grow indifferent to thoſe amuſements which have ſo much contributed to throw them into diſorder. Examine yourſelf now, my dear Miſs Belladen, and tell me if you have friendſhip enough for me to undertake an affair which at firſt may appear difficult, but I hope from the great goodneſs of your heart, and ſweetneſs of manners, that

it

it will be in time effected: but then you muſt promiſe me not to ſhun my lord.

Good Heaven! madam, ſaid Myra, to what will you expoſe me?

To no kind of danger, my dear, replied my lady. His lordſhip loves you with too much delicacy to give you the leaſt room to be apprehenſive of any thing unbecoming in his behaviour to you. Come, you muſt not refuſe me, (ſeeing Myra heſitate) my dear Miſs Belladen.

Indeed my lady, ſaid Myra, you muſt pardon me, if I cannot help thinking, though I ſhould happen to differ from your ladyſhip in opinion, that no perſon upon earth is ſo proper to make my lord ſenſible of his error in this reſpect as yourſelf.

But he will not liſten with half the attention to me, as to the woman whom he loves, my dear Myra.

Myra hung down her head and was ſilent. She felt emotions of pity for Lady Amſbury mixed with reſpectful ſenſations. A baſhful diffidence alſo, made her unwilling to enter upon ſo intereſting a ſubject with her ladyſhip: yet ſhe was not willing abſolutely to decline uſing her utmoſt endeavours to ſerve her friend, whoſe behaviour had been always ſo extremely obliging.

While Lady Amſbury, reading Myra's doubts in her face, continued preſſing her to agree to what ſhe had ſo earneſtly deſired, the ſudden appearance of my lord, at that inſtant, as it was quite unexpected, added extremely to her confuſion.

confuſion. Her cheeks were immediately crimſoned, and my lady, catching the infection, threw down her eyes and ſighed.

They were both ſitting on a green ſeat in the garden, when my lord ſurprized them, at the ſight of whom he was himſelf not leſs aſtoniſhed, becauſe they appeared ſo diſconcerted at his approach.

Lady Amſbury, however, had more preſence of mind than her young friend, and haſtily riſing, made her eſcape down an alley in the garden.

Myra, vexed to be thus left alone with my lord, and quite unprepared to ſpeak upon the ſubject ſo earneſtly propoſed to her by her ladyſhip, was going to follow her: but he took her by the hand, and ſitting down by her,

ſaid, Don't let me frighten you away, Miſs Belladen: at leaſt, till I have obtained your forgiveneſs for this diſagreeable intruſion. My wife is happy enough to be truſted with your ſecrets, madam—

My lady has truſted me with none, my lord, but what you may be made acquainted with.

I have no deſire to know them, Miſs Belladen. I am too polite a huſband to wiſh to ſearch into my wife's private affairs.

Politeneſs, my lord, is not the only deſirable quality in a huſband.

How, cried my lord, eagerly, and with a more ſpirited tone of voice, has ſhe then been accuſing me to you of a failure in any part of my conduct towards her?

So

So far from accuſing you my lord, that if your lordſhip had over-heard all that ſhe has been ſaying about you, your heart muſt have been melted to a degree of tenderneſs greater perhaps than you have yet been ſenſible of.

Heavens! madam! to what does all this tend? I have done nothing to deſerve either the blame or the praiſe of Lady Amſbbury juſt at this time.

'Tis true, my lord, ſaid Myra. It is that extreme indifference in you, of which I have ventured to complain.

You, Miſs Belladen? you, complain of my indifference? Good Heaven, did not my reſpect, my fear of diſpleaſing her by whom I would give my life only to be endured, prevent me, you ſhould have no reaſon to accuſe me of indifference.

Yes my lord, replied ſhe with a bluſh, which gave a new ſpirit to her countenance, I muſt accuſe you of being indifferent to, of over-looking, the charming perſon, and the deſirable qualifications of the moſt amiable of women. You will, no doubt, think me impertinent in taking ſuch liberties with you, my lord, but if you had, with me, heard the tender language in which Lady Amſbury deſcribed the graces of your perſon, if you had heard with what rapture ſhe dwelt on the pleaſures flowing from your converſation, you would have been quite ready to blame yourſelf for not admiring, and indeed ſometimes even ſlighting, ſo lovely a woman, who finds no happineſs but in your affection for her.

My

My lord appeared both amazed and confounded at theſe reproaches, and with a tone which ſhewed that he was piqued, replied, And ſo my wife, it ſeems, has been complaining of me to you, madam?

No, my lord; I repeat what I ſaid at firſt, I have been complaining of you to her.

S'death! cried his lordſhip, greatly agitated, and for what? Of what have I been guilty, Miſs Belladen, that you ſhould complain of me to my wife? Notwithſtanding all that I have ſuffered, I have never, not once diſcovered the paſſion which devours me. Here he ſtopped ſhort, as if he was fearful of proceeding.

Myra, gueſſing from his manner, and from what he had dropped, that ſome-

thing farther might eſcape him, which ſhe would not have been deſirous to hear, entered at once, and largely, into the merits of Lady Amſbury, and dwelt very much upon her extreme, her almoſt new-born, tenderneſs for him. It gives her my lord, continued ſhe, a thouſand anxious moments, a thouſand delicate fears, leſt it ſhould not be returned. And the confeſſion of this extreme affection of hers, for your lordſhip, was the ſubject of our converſation when you ſurprized us, in which I freely declared, that I wondered how her ladyſhip could be ſo fond of a huſband who appeared to me to receive her kindneſs with the utmoſt indifference.

The modeſt and artleſs manner in which Miſs Belladen related the extreme

treme tenderneſs of Lady Amſbury, both aſtoniſhed and touched him: ſo little did he imagine that he was beloved by her: but the pathetic, the eloquent recital of this love-tale by Myra, made a more deep impreſſion upon him than the tale itſelf, and greatly tended to increaſe the inclination he had for ſome time felt for her.

He ſat down by her: he looked at her with eyes which too plainly diſcloſed his feelings. After a ſhort pauſe, Could my Lady Amſbury, ſaid he, find nobody but you, Miſs Belladen, to paint the tenderneſs of a paſſion which you alone can inſpire, and which gathers new force from every word which falls from that delicious mouth? She ſhould have choſen a far leſs lovely orator to plead her cauſe, and not one

of

of the moſt amiable women that nature ever made.

Theſe ſpeeches, my lord, ſaid Myra, riſing and bluſhing, but too well reprove me for the liberty which I have taken with you: but as Heaven's my witneſs, all that I have ſaid, was purely from the moſt reſpectful and affectionate eſteem for Lady Amſbury, who is entirely miſerable for want of a kind return to her extreme affection for you; and who is not only the moſt lovely woman, but the moſt deſerving upon earth of your lordſhip's warmeſt eſteem, I hope I may be excuſed.

You may indeed, madam, ſaid my lord, could any thing you ſay ever want an excuſe. But it is utterly impoſſible for me to feel a paſſion for Lady Amſbury,

bury, while my whole heart is ſo totally engroſſed by Miſs Belladen.

Why then my lord, ſaid Myra, with a look full of modeſt dignity, and firm determination, I take my leave of you for ever. I flattered myſelf that my engagement with Mr. Weſtbury would have preſerved me from being inſulted, at leaſt by you, my lord, though you pay no regard yourſelf to the ſacred ties which ought to prevent you from owning an inclination for any woman but your amiable lady. Be aſſured, therefore, that this your very diſhonourable behaviour has ſo thoroughly let me into your character, that were both you and I at our liberty, and would you lay your fortune and yonr title at my feet, I would look down upon you and them, my lord, with the utmoſt

moſt contempt. Can I ſay any thing ſtronger to a man who is ſo utterly undeſerving, and who can ſuffer ſuch a wife as Lady Amſbury to pine and ſicken for a heart which, were ſhe at laſt to gain it, would be extremely unworthy of her?

At the end of this animated ſpeech ſhe left him in the utmoſt amazement: but he ſoon recovered himſelf enough to overtake her: for though he knew not what to ſay to her, he wiſhed to hear her again.

He had juſt got ſight of her, at the turning of a walk, when he ſaw Lady Amſbury run to meet her, and take her affectionately round the neck: after which they preſently came on, arm in arm together.

He

He ſlipped, unſeen, behind a hedge, which, while it concealed him from their eyes, did not deprive him of their converſation.

As they approached, My dear, dear girl, ſaid Lady Amſbury, as I have heard all, I know how infinitely I ought to value this proof of your friendſhip: but yet, give me leave to ſay Myra, that you was very ſevere upon my dear lovely George. How can he help it, if he likes you beſt? You are, to be ſure, a ſweet girl, and as I have brought you in his way, I muſt take all the blame to myſelf. But, perhaps, Myra, when you are married, and irrecoverably gone, he may deign to caſt a look on me, as he is now ſenſible to what a degree I adore him. You ſtare at me, child, with your pretty eyes, and think

think me a little romantic: but believe me, Myra, I ſhould neither indulge myſelf in theſe fancies nor expreſſions, were not the man already my huſband: yet, as I think I may venture to ſay, that in all the time we have lived together, I never knew he had a heart, at leaſt a feeling one, till now; how could I think of endeavouring to be miſtreſs of it? 'Tis to you therefore, my amiable Miſs Belladen, that I am indebted for this diſcovery: and if I can, by ſtudying my huſband's temper, and by a ready, and tender compliance with his humour, bring him to be ſenſible, at leaſt, that I have done every thing in my power to deſerve his love, who knows, Myra, whether I ſhall not at length be amply recompenſed for all my ſufferings?

The

The tears of tenderneſs and ſenſibility, by interrupting her voice, prevented her from proceeding, but gave, at the ſame time, a new and unuſual ſoftneſs to it.

My lord, who wanted neither ſentiment nor paſſion, felt himſelf ſtrangely affected. His eyes were involuntarily moiſtened, while he heard himſelf ſo tenderly ſpoken of by a woman who was really exceedingly pleaſing in her perſon; but whom, ſince their union, he had ſcarce found leiſure to conſider as an object of deſire. He was now touched by her patience, her mildneſs, and affectionate fondneſs for him, which ſhe had not been able to reſtrain, even after he had declared that his heart wandered to another. The gentle manner in which ſhe excuſed his behaviour

viour to her, and the tears which ſhe could not controul, quite melted him. He reſolved to throw himſelf in her way, to ſooth, to comfort her: but he was both fearful and aſhamed. He advanced therefore, with timorous ſteps, from his concealment, and coming behind her, embraced her unprepared, with one arm, and preſſed her to his boſom.

She ſtarted, ſhe trembled, and ſinking upon his ſhoulder cried, Heaven's! my lord, how came you here?

I came, my Emilia, ſaid he, to tell you that you have gained a heart which, till now, has been ignorant of your intrinſic worth; and, by acknowledging my thorough ſenſe of your merit before this lady, to make her ſome amends for the indelicacy with which I have

treated

treated her, in venturing only to ſuppoſe that ſhe could liſten to me.

Let us both then, my dear, ſaid Lady Amſbury, pay our thanks to this dear good girl, who has behaved ſo unexceptionably kind, and proper to us, and may her ſweet, amiable example, render me one day an object of your inclination, as I am now of your kind compaſſion.

Be from this moment, my deareſt Emilia, happy according to your wiſhes. He then tenderly embraced her, and, inſtantly turning to Myra, ſaid, Let me alſo be aſſured of your pardon, madam, for which I may, with more reaſon, hope, as you may be certain that from my increaſing reſpect for you, and affection for Lady Amſbury, I ſhall be

ſufficiently

ſufficiently hindered from committing any offences of the ſame nature again.

Myra replied, that it would give her the higheſt ſatisfaction to think that ſhe had been in any ſhape inſtrumental to their mutual happineſs, which ſhe ſincerely wiſhed to be, and which ſhe now believed would be laſting.

Myra was truly pleaſed to ſee my lord ſo ſoon made ſenſible of his error, by her ladyſhip's engaging behaviour to him, and as they were now come to a right underſtanding, ſlipped away, in order to leave them by themſelves: and they did not attempt to call her back.

When ſhe found herſelf at liberty in her own apartment, at Mr. Elrington's, ſhe gave herſelf up to an unavailing ſorrow, which preyed upon her health,

by

by being indulged, and would not permit her to accept of Mr. Weſtbury's hand, though ſhe blamed herſelf very much at the ſame time for ſo long delaying his expected happineſs. He alſo ſeemed to think that the delay was unavoidable, and diſcovered no uncommon patience for a man ſo deeply in love.

Mr. Elrington had, in his letters to Sir Edward, mentioned the concern which the retarding of this marriage, and Miſs Belladen's indiſpoſition, the cauſe of it, had given him: and this intelligence did not in the leaſt tend to raiſe Sir Edward's ſpirits. A thouſand circumſtances now roſe in his mind, and made him believe himſelf not hated by his Myra. Flattered by reflecting in this manner, he was often tempted

to

to go down to Elm-Walk, and to throw himſelf at her feet, and to beg that ſhe would receive his addreſſes. But when he alſo conſidered that ſhe was ſo far engaged, that every thing was ready for the performance of the marriage-ceremony, and that nothing but her ill-health prevented it, he thought that all his intreaties, all his endeavours to prevail on her to change her purpoſe, would be vain and fruitleſs: And indeed, continued he, in his ſoliloquy, with what face can I make ſuch a propoſal, unleſs I had received the moſt authentic, the moſt undoubted proofs of her love for me? Such proofs I have not received: all my ſurmizes of that nature were only the deluſions of a diſtempered imagination.

Tortured

Tortured with theſe ideas, he would have given the world to have been with her: but he could not bear the thoughts of being an eye-witneſs to the attentions of a favoured lover: he therefore reſolved to ſtay a while longer where he was. Every place was diſagreeable to him, but he was leſs likely to be interrupted there, in giving way to the melancholy which oppreſſed him.

Sir Edward's fine perſon, however, and graceful air, did not paſs unobſerved even in his retirement, for the houſe adjoining to that in which he lived, was inhabited by a lady and her daughter: the former was a widow and miſtreſs of a handſome fortune: ſo was the latter to be, but ſhe was entirely in her mother's power till ſhe came of age.

Of theſe ladies, though they were ſo near neighbours, Sir Edward had taken ſo little notice, that if any body had aſked him if they were young or old, beautiful or ugly, he would have been very much embarraſſed for an anſwer. They frequently indeed paſſed him both in and out of their carriage, and might often have been viewed by him, from his window, in their garden: but though he ſhewed no curioſity with regard to them, they were by no means ſo indifferent about him. They repeatedly interrogated their own ſervants about him, who queſtioned his ſervants as cloſely, and their converſations would certainly have reached his ears if they had dared to take ſuch a liberty. But Sir Edward having no vices which required either aſſiſtance or concealment,

had

had no occaſion to make confidents of thoſe who were only hired to wait upon him. He was the beſt of maſters, but he never ſuffered the ſmalleſt approaches to ſuch familiarities, but when he, for private reaſons, commanded them.

Miſs Belladen heard Mr. Elrington, from time to time, mention Sir Edward's letters, but heard no particulars; nor did ſhe think proper to make any enquiries about him. All her fortitude was employed to forget him: and ſhe endeavoured only to make herſelf, if poſſible, as much in love with Weſtbury, as he appeared to be with her.

During theſe ſtruggles, this conflict in her tender boſom, now, from the ſingularity of her ſituation, more vio-

lent than ever, Lady Amſbury, whoſe eſteem and friendſhip for her were daily increaſing, and who, by the gentleneſs of her behaviour, and the ſweetneſs of her manners, had made a complete conqueſt over my lord, frequently ſent invitations to her: ſtill more frequently fetched her herſelf to the park, or called to take her out for an airing, which ſhe thought might be of ſervice to her.

In one of theſe little excurſions, when they were by themſelves, my lady, after having laviſhed her praiſes upon her for the friendlineſs of her behaviour, with regard to herſelf and my lord, told her that ſhe had conceived ſo high an opinion both of the goodneſs of her head and heart, that ſhe ſhould inſiſt upon having her advice

upon

upon every material occaſion. There is at this very inſtant, continued her ladyſhip, a point which requires all my conſideration, my dear Myra, and conſequently yours.

She then told her that ſhe fancied ſhe had obſerved a riſing inclination in Miſs Amſbury for Sir Charles Aſtley.

How far Sir Charles has encouraged her I cannot tell, but he has been a very earneſt admirer of Miſs Gilmour's, who is my intimate acquaintance, and who is, I ſtill believe, not at all averſe to Sir Charles, though ſhe has perhaps given herſelf a few airs. It would certainly be an advantageous match for Harriot; but if Charlotte Gilmour ſhould relent, and if Sir Charles ſhould afterwards think that he might have married

her, both my ſiſter and he may be very unhappy. I don't know a greater calamity than to be united with a perſon whom one cannot love: or to love without having our affection returned. What can be more diſtreſsful than ſuch an union?

Myra, who was juſt going to give a ſtriking proof of the truth of this obſervation, heaved a deep ſigh: but ſoon recovered herſelf; and upon Lady Amſbury's preſſing her to tell her whether ſhe did not think that it would be friendly to inform Miſs Gilmour of Sir Charles's ſeeming attachment to Harriot, and begging her to tell her, in confidence, if ſhe knew whether Mr. Elrington was inclined to favour the addreſſes of Sir Charles to his niece, Miſs Belladen replied, with the utmoſt frankneſs,

neſs, Mr. Elrington, madam, has, I believe, rather a favourable opinion of Sir Charles; and he was, I know, very fond of Miſs Gilmour.

Myra indeed ſpoke in the higheſt terms concerning Charlotte, though ſhe had not behaved to her with that openneſs and affability, which the amiableneſs of her manners excited from moſt people.

You are a good girl, my dear Myra, ſaid my lady; you wiſh, I ſee, to have every body happy, and yet—

Here ſhe ſtopped a moment, looking earneſtly in her face.

And yet you really make Weſtbury wait a long time for you. Is he, my dear girl, the man of your choice?

This queſtion, ſomewhat abruptly uttered, though with a mild accent,

and accompanied with a look of infinite good-nature, both ſtartled and hurt Miſs Belladen extremely. She bluſhed and turned pale alternately: ſhe was fluttered and confuſed.

Lady Amſbury, perceiving herſelf immediately in the wrong, was diſconcerted alſo: My dear Myra, ſaid ſhe, I have, I fear, propoſed a very improper queſtion—but excuſe me, and forget the impropriety of it. We do not always think before we ſpeak.

Nor is it always in our power, my lady, to give a direct anſwer, replied Myra, coming a little to herſelf. Yet I can aſſure you that I do not accept of Weſtbury's advantageous propoſals, with a view to be placed in a ſituation, to which, from the ſmallneſs of my fortune I have no pretenſions: in accept-

ing

ing them, madam, I only follow the advice and perſuaſions of my good friend Mr. Elrington. Mr. Weſtbury, is doubtleſs, exceedingly amiable, but it is not permitted us, continued ſhe, with a half-ſmothered ſigh, in marriage, any more than in the other occurrences of life, to enjoy every wiſh of our hearts. If we, however, act entirely by the advice of thoſe who have proved themſelves to be our friends, we ſurely ought not to feel the pangs of ſelf-reproaches.

As ſhe was very much affected towards the latter end of this reply, Lady Amſbury, who loved her, and who felt for her, recollected what Miſs Gilmour had hinted at when ſhe mentioned Myra to her, and taking her kindly by her trembling hand, ſaid, Forgive me,

my dear Miſs Belladen, once more: and, for my excuſe, remember that our beſt friends are ſometimes guilty of impertinence, from their very friendſhip for us. May you be ever happy, as I truly believe that nobody deſerves happineſs more than yourſelf.

Then haſtily turning the converſation, to prevent Myra from dwelling on any thing that might be diſagreeable to her, ſaid, I will write to Charlotte then immediately, and let her know how her old flame amuſes himſelf.

Lady Amſbury kept her word, but without renewing the invitation which ſhe had formerly ſent to her.

Miſs Gilmour, who really loved Aſtley, (though ſhe was not at all willing to own her paſſion for him) and who had

had not met with that gentle ſubmiſſive diſpoſition in any of her admirers, before ſhe uſed him ſo ſlightly, received the news of the endeavours of Miſs Amſbury to make a conqueſt over him, with much perturbation: and determined directly to avail herſelf of Lady Amſbury's firſt invitation to the park. But, upon recollection, her pride put a ſtop to the precipitation of theſe meaſures. His forbearing to call even once upon her, and his abrupt reply to the card which ſhe, in her own opinion, condeſcendingly ſent to him, hurt her extremely: yet ſhe could not baniſh him from her mind: neither could ſhe bear that another ſhould allure him from her. She therefore reſolved to accept of her friend's former invitation, and to go down to the

park. If I don't like my reception there, ſaid ſhe, I can but go afterwards to my uncle Elrington's.

Charlotte ſoon obtained her father's leave to pay a viſit to Lady Amſbury, and actually arrived at the park before that lady in the leaſt expected to ſee her.

She was filled with uncommon emotions at the ſight of a neighbourhood in which ſhe had been at firſt ſenſible of the tendereſt of all paſſions, but endeavoured to conceal them.

Flying into Lady Amſbury's dreſſing-room, with a laughing air, ſhe cried, Dear, dear creature, how do you do? Am not I the beſt girl in the world to make you a viſit, when I had given you no hopes of one?

Lady

Lady Amſbury returned her ſalutation with a welcome, but it was accompanied with an arch ſmile.

Ah! Charlotte, Charlotte, it is not to ſee me, that you are now come: it was not my invitation, but my intelligence which has brought you down in this hurry.

You provoking creature you, replied Miſs Gilmour half-bluſhing, and how could you have the ill-nature to write, and never ſay that you ſhould be glad to ſee me? But I have puniſhed you for that omiſſion by coming: and now Lady Amſbury——

And now Miſs Gilmour, ſaid my lady, interrupting her, juſt when ſhe ſaw that ſhe was going eagerly to enquire after Aſtley—

Pſhaw,

Pſhaw, my lady, I did not believe you could have been ſo teazing, ſo very tormenting; but you never were in love, and ſo there is leſs wonder at your being inſenſible of the feelings of other people.

Lady Amſbury laughed out at this little fretful ſpeech of her young friend, who was quite ignorant of the harmony which now ſubſiſted between her and his lordſhip, and ſaid, Well, Charlotte, if you will fairly confeſs that you are really and abſolutely in love, much may be ſaid, and—poſſibly—(ſtill laughing)—much may be done for you.

Pho—how monſtrouſly ridiculous you are, my lady: I am not in love, nor will I ever be in that ſimple way. But won't you allow that it muſt pique one's pride exceedingly to be treated

as

as I have been by an inſignificant thing, who, you know was nothing, but the other day.

Juſt as theſe words were out of her mouth, a little ſcuffle was heard without the door of the room, which was preſently opened by Sir Charles Aſtley with one hand, leading in Miſs Amſbury with the other, who, bluſhing, hung back and cried, Dear Sir Charles do let me go now, and I will ſhew it to you another time indeed.

No no, ſaid he, looking at her with the greateſt pleaſantry, I will not let you eſcape now, for fear I ſhould not catch you again. Pray Lady Amſbury, continued he, turning towards her ladyſhip, aſſiſt me.

His ſurprize at ſeeing Miſs Gilmour, when he thus addreſſed himſelf to her ladyſhip,

ladyſhip, is not to be deſcribed. He changed colour immediately, and quitted the hand of Miſs Amſbury, which he had almoſt detained by force. He ſtammered out ſomething ſcarcely articulated, but ſhe drew up into ſo ſtately a figure, and returned his intended politeneſs with ſo very formal a curtſy, that, as he was before aſtoniſhed and embarraſſed, he was now rendered perfectly incapable of attempting to utter a ſyllable.

Lady Amſbury, who good-naturedly pitied his confuſion, and who wiſhed to give him conſequence, was really half-angry with Miſs Gilmour for her unbecoming haughtineſs, as ſhe afterwards called it, and ſaid, Pray Sir Charles, what is the ſubject of your diſpute with Harriot? Will you condeſcend

deſcend to refer it to me, and let me be the judge between you?

Moſt willingly, my lady, replied the young baronet, trying to recall his ſcattered ideas a little: Miſs Amſbury has made a very pretty drawing, and tho' ſhe confeſſes that the execution of it is entirely owing to the hints which ſhe had taken from me, ſhe refuſes to let me look at it.

Is that right, Harriot? ſaid my lady ſmiling. Come, come ſhew it to me.

Miſs Amſbury, who was not leſs confounded than Sir Charles, at the unexpected ſight of Miſs Gilmour, and the diſconcerted countenance of that gentleman; and who, beſides had a particular reaſon for concealing the ſlight exertion of her genius, begged her ſiſter, with additional bluſhes, not only to excuſe

excuſe her herſelf, but to prevail upon Sir Charles to do ſo, at leaſt for the preſent.

Well, ſaid he, who now began to recover his ſpirits, if you will promiſe to ſhew it to me in the green walk at the bottom of the ſhrubbery, I will wait there for you.

Poor Harriot, pleaſed with this appointment, after a moment's pauſe conſenting, he ſeized her hand upon ſo obliging a promiſe, and kiſſed it as ſhe left the room.

This little piece of gallantry, unmeaning as it was, incenſed Miſs Gilmour. In ſpite of all her efforts to conceal her emotions, ſhe coloured, and began to think that things were much farther advanced than either of the parties thought they were. She even fancied

cied that ſhe ſaw Aſtley too far engaged with Miſs Amſbury to be recalled, unleſs ſhe could by all her ſeducing arts awaken his former paſſion for her. She therefore immediately began to lay aſide the haughtineſs of her looks, and to aſſume an aſpect infinitely more ſoft and bewitching. She then entered into a converſation with Lady Amſbury, during which, ſhe contrived to vary both her features and her attitudes in the moſt agreeable manner, and played off, by turns, the different ways of pleaſing: now ſhe was languiſhingly tender, now ſpirited and full of vivacity: caſting, from time to time, the moſt captivating ſmiles at Aſtley; not only to encourage him to join in their converſation, but to obſerve how he was affected by the new methods which ſhe

took

took to charm him. Her deſigns had the deſired effect upon him: but, after the treatment which he had met with, he was not at all willing to let her ſee that ſhe had ſtill ſo much power over him. The wound which ſhe had made in his heart had never been cured; the ſight of her, when and where he ſo little expected to ſee her, had at firſt indeed, very much embarraſſed him, and her forbidding behaviour afterwards had tied up his tongue, but when ſhe became the languiſhing and the lively Miſs Gilmour, by the variations in her features and the changes in her attitudes; the Miſs Gilmour, in ſhort, whom he had lately, ſo tenderly loved, who had, by deigning to liſten to him, gave him ſome room to believe that ſhe was not averſe to him, he ſoon found

found that ſhe, and ſhe alone reigned ſupreme miſtreſs of his heart. Terrified, however, at the thoughts of being a ſecond time repulſed, he kept down every ſoft ſenſation, and tried to look indifference: but he expreſſed what he did not feel in ſo awkward a manner, that Charlotte began to conceive hopes that ſhe might with proper management, ſoon recover a heart which had, ſhe imagined, been guilty of ſtraying from its right owner.

Charlotte, however, finding Sir Charles rather backward in falling into chat, grew ſtill more and more obliging. She every now and then addreſſed herſelf to him; not with the familiarity of a perſon who had been formerly intimate with him, but yet with a kind of reſpect, ſoftened by an apparent deſire

deſire to render every word and look agreeable to him.

He could not withſtand this artful manner of pleaſing. He fell in with her deſigns ſo far as to treat her in her own way: and as he really wiſhed to make a laſting impreſſion upon her, he behaved with the utmoſt reſpect, and evidently diſcovered a ſtrong inclination to accompany it with all the tenderneſs of the lover.

This inclination, as it became every moment more powerful, was expreſſed ſometimes by downcaſt looks, and as often by gentle and half-ſuppreſſed ſighs.

Miſs Gilmour ſaw very ſoon her ſucceſs, and exulted at it: but ſhe, as well as Sir Charles, was afraid of diſcovering too much, as ſhe had found,

by

by experience, that he was ready to fly off upon ill-uſage. She, therefore, determined to be leſs haſty, to be more gentle in her proceedings for the future, and not to ſhew any airs till ſhe had abſolutely ſecured her man, that he might not, upon any change in her behaviour, have it in his power to give her up again.

While ſhe and Lord and Lady Amſbury only were with him, ſhe had no doubts concerning the execution of her deſigns, but ſhe did not much like the intimacy which was pretty viſible between him and Miſs Amſbury: who, though at firſt ſight ſhe appeared a moſt diſagreeable girl, pained her with her preſence: ſhe had but an indifferent opinion of her, but ſhe was jealous enough, notwithſtanding, to wiſh that

that ſhe was abſent from Amſbury-Park.

This young lady, who was certainly amiable, and who as certainly felt for Sir Charles more than ſhe well knew how to diſguiſe, was extremely chagrined at the arrival of Miſs Gilmour, though ſhe was not willing to confeſs that chagrin even to her own heart. Sir Charles, indeed, had ſometimes behaved to her with gallantry, but he had never once ſuppoſed that ſhe had been affected by it. Had he imagined that his little politeneſſes would have been taken ſeriouſly, he would have immediately laid them aſide, as he was too ſincere to wiſh to inſpire a regard which he did not mean to return. Though, if Miſs Gilmour had not ſo ſuddenly intruded upon them, they might,

might, probably, have trifled themſelves into an inclination, before the gentleman, at leaſt, was aware of it.

When theſe three, thus ſituated, met at dinner, Miſs Gilmour was all ſweetneſs and condeſcenſion: Miſs Amſbury was ſerious but obſervant: Sir Charles was reſpectfully diſtant to Charlotte; politely indifferent to Harriot.

When the coffee was removed after dinner, Lady Amſbury aſked Miſs Gilmour to ſing.

Charlotte, who well remembered that Aſtley had never had an opportunity to hear her exert her muſical talents, either in the vocal or inſtrumental way; talents in which ſhe certainly excelled, could have hugged her friend for this lucky thought: but checked

her riſing joy; and knowing that the moſt deſirable pleaſure when too cheaply purchaſed, loſes a great part of its value, gave her ladyſhip the trouble of repeating her requeſt ſeveral times. After much preſſing, ſhe roſe, and with a ſeeming reluctance ſat down to the harpſichord. When ſhe had juſt flouriſhed over the keys, ſhe hoped that they would excuſe her, if ſhe was not perfectly in voice, as ſhe had been a good deal out of ſpirits, and had not practiſed lately.

The well-timed modeſty of this ſhort apology, gave her new beauties in the eyes of Sir Charles: but when ſhe began to throw out all her powers in the pathetic, he was abſolutely entranced: loſt in tranſport. Yet he had ſtill preſence of mind ſufficient to enable him

to

to controul his raptures. He offered great violence to his inclination, by not intreating a repetition of the charming ſounds, but could not totally hide the emotions which they excited in him. They would have, indeed, quite driven the garden-appointment out of his head, had he not accidentally turned his eyes towards Harriot, who was ſitting in a penſive attitude, jogging one foot over the other, with a countenance expreſſive of the deepeſt diſcontent. As ſoon as his eyes were directed at her, a languid ſmile appeared upon her face and reminded him of his engagement.

Miſs Amſbury, ſaid he faintly, don't you remember your promiſe?

You are not now at leiſure, Sir Charles.

I wait yours, madam.

The uncommon ſerioufneſs with which he uttered thoſe four words, and the coldneſs of his whole air at the ſame time, affronted her pride: and though ſhe was greatly mortified that Miſs Gilmour was a witneſs to Sir Charles's behaviour towards her, ſhe reſolved to affect an indifference which ſhe was far from feeling.

I ſhall be glad to be excuſed this evening, Sir Charles: I have a little engagement upon my hands which I did not recollect till juſt now.

He was going moſt freely to give his aſſent to her keeping her engagement, when a look from Charlotte, who could no longer reſtrain the joy with which ſhe was elated, at ſeeing the power which ſhe ſtill had over him, ſtopped him. He proteſted

ed that he would not be put off. You have given me your word, and I dare not doubt your honour.

Poor Miſs Amſbury, thus challenged to meet a man to whom ſhe had no averſion, only replied with a motion of her head: being at that moment rather undetermined how to proceed.

Miſs Gilmour, who ſaw that Aſtley had a mind to play with her at her own game, and was not in love enough to be a ſecond time fooled by her, if he could poſſibly avoid it, felt mortified and grew out of humour with herſelf, and reſerved to Sir Charles.

They were all in this way, when the arrival of a friend of Lord Amſbury's gave a new turn to the ſpirits of every body in the room.

This gentleman was a Colonel Belville, a ſoldier of faſhion and fortune, the next heir to an earldom, and apparently not far diſtant from it, as his uncle was both advanced in years, and in a very bad ſtate of health. He was a ſenſible, well-bred man about thirty; genteel in his perſon, and eaſy in his manners. He had ſeen enough of the world, eſpecially the gay world, to deſpiſe cloſe attachment to it, and was actually in ſearch of an amiable woman, who could have a ſufficient quantity of love for him, and a ſufficient reliſh for his turn of thinking, to give up the follies of life, for the enjoyment of his ſociety, and the company of a few of his ſelect friends.

With this view Colonel Belville had been to make ſome viſits among his acquaintance

quaintance, in order to inſpect a little the manner and behaviour of the young women of education under their care. Fortune was to him not ſo conſiderable an object as it is to moſt people, as he was ſo near the poſſeſſion of ſo ample a one. He had indeed reſerved his viſit to Amſbury-Park for the laſt, becauſe he had occaſionally ſeen and converſed with Miſs Amſbury while ſhe lived with her aunt: and had obſerved ſomething in her which he thought very agreeable; and as he had a friendſhip for Lord and Lady Amſbury, and knew that their ſiſter was, at this time, rather a burthen to them, from the awkward ſituation of their affairs, he had a mind to do a handſome thing by taking the young lady, if ſhe could like him, without any

money; at leaſt, to leave it in my lord's choice to pay her fortune when it was moſt convenient to him.

Full of theſe friendly, theſe generous intentions, he made his appearance before them, and was ſo ſincerely welcomed by my lord and my lady, tho' they were perfectly ignorant of the occaſion of his viſit, that his countenance, naturally inclined to be chearful, expreſſed an uncommon degree of alacrity. The eaſy gallantry of his manner, his un-embarraſſed addreſs, and the ſpirit of his converſation, ſtruck Miſs Gilmour, ever in ſearch of new conqueſts, with a deſire of engaging him: he was at leaſt, ſhe thought, a charming fellow to alarm and keep poor, Aſtley in order. She, therefore, at once turned all her attention from the baro-

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net to the colonel, to the no ſmall diſquiet of the former, who, by this unexpected interview, and the new and elegant attractions which ſhe had diſcovered, found that he only deceived himſelf, when he imagined that he loved her no longer.

After about half an hour's general converſation, Lord Amſbury aſked the colonel to take a view of his ſituation.

As ſoon as they were gone, for that purpoſe, Sir Charles again reminded Harriot of her promiſe.

She roſe, with ſeeming unwillingneſs to fetch her drawing: while he took his way to the place of appointment, leaving Miſs Gilmour and Lady Amſbury together.

Sir Charles had, before Miſs Gilmour's arrival, given way to the plea-

ſure which he felt in Harriot's attachment to him, and fancied that ſhe might in time, ſupply the place which the former held in his heart. He had therefore encouraged in himſelf the ſlighteſt propenſity to be pleaſed with her, and to ſhew her that he was ſo. But upon Miſs Gilmour's coming down, he found it would be to no purpoſe to diſſemble with himſelf any longer, and found too, that it would be even criminal to attempt to deceive Miſs Amſbury, to whom he ſaw he was by no means indifferent.

In this frame of mind he walked ſlowly to the bottom of the ſhrubbery and threw himſelf careleſsly upon one of the ſeats to wait for Miſs Amſbury, who ſoon afterwards came, and with a dejected air ſat down by him.

She

She ſat down, but did not ſpeak a ſingle word.

He roſe up at her coming near him, but was alſo ſilent. He wiſhed to have her know that he could not love any woman but Charlotte: but he feared that the knowledge of it might give her ſome uneaſineſs, and therefore he was at a loſs how to begin, for he was an uncommon character among the modern young fellows, being both modeſt and good-natured.

After a pretty long pauſe, Where is your drawing Miſs Amſbury? ſaid he, with a ſmile upon his countenance.

I have not brought it, replied ſhe, with a low, plaintive accent.

Did you not promiſe that I ſhould ſee it?

I did, and——

Will Miſs Amſbury be worſe than her word? ſaid he ſoftly to her.

When it is for her future peace, anſwered ſhe with a tremulous voice, will not Sir Charles Aſtley have the goodneſs to excuſe her?

Would to Heaven, replied he, with an expreſſion of the kindeſt concern, that I could do any thing to preſerve or promote the peace of ſo amiable a heart as yours, madam, ſo every way deſerving of happineſs! But my own labours under ſo many difficulties at preſent, that I really want the aſſiſtance of ſo kind, ſo ſenſible a friend, as you have ever ſhewed yourſelf to me. You muſt have obſerved my emotion at the unexpected ſight of Miſs Gilmour: you can be no ſtranger, as you are the

ſiſter

ſiſter of Lady Amſbury, to my attachment to her: and though, from the undeſerved, (I hope I may ſay undeſerved) treatment I have met from her, I blame myſelf greatly for not having been able to beſtow my affection on a more worthy object; I find it impoſſible to behold her with indifference. I have not the leaſt reaſon to flatter myſelf that Miſs Gilmour will ever be mine: but I am alſo but too ſenſible that I can never be another's.

He ſtopped here, and felt a conſiderable relief from having calmed his conſcience; for he was ſhocked with the thoughts of being ſuppoſed to make any attempts to gain a heart which he wiſhed not to be maſter of, and which he would not willingly render uneaſy by filling it with falſe hopes.

Poor

Poor Harriot, who in this little ſpeech immediately ſaw an end of all her hopes, heaved an involuntary ſigh, for ſhe at the ſame time perceived the full merit of his endeavouring to relieve her ſuſpence, without ſeeming to be conſcious that ſhe was at all prejudiced in his favour. This delicate behaviour, therefore, in Sir Charles, raiſed him in her eſteem. He was not blind to her partiality in his favour, but believing that every method which he could take to ſooth and comfort her, would only tend to increaſe her diſtreſs, he roſe up from the ſeat, and ſaid, I ſee, Miſs Amſbury, with concern, that by making you acquainted with my diſquietudes, I ſhall treſpaſs too much upon the natural goodneſs of your heart, which inclines you to compaſſionate

compaſſionate every creature that is unhappy. I will, therefore, no longer trouble you with complaints, which, I am well-aſſured, the ſweetneſs of your diſpoſition pains you to hear.

At the concluſion of theſe words he left her, and left her unable to reply. There is no ſaying what effect Sir Charles's ſpeech might have had upon her, if a flood of tears had not given ſome eaſe to her over-charged heart.

While ſhe was thus giving way to a ſorrow which, though ſhe bluſhed to indulge it, ſhe could not conquer, Colonel Belville appeared. Sitting down by her, and taking her hand in his, he began, in the moſt gentle, and ſoothing manner imaginable to adminiſter comfort to her. He had indeed heard every word that Sir Charles had uttered,

ed, for as ſoon as my lord brought him to that part of the garden, he was ſent for to a perſon upon buſineſs, and left him to amuſe himſelf there till his return. His attention was ſoon entirely taken up by Sir Charles's addreſs to Miſs Amſbury, which at firſt gave him no ſmall ſatisfaction, as he looked upon it as the ſtrongeſt proof of fair dealing; but when he found that ſhe was ſo much diſturbed by it, he felt an inclination too powerful to be reſiſted to relieve her enxiety, tho' perhaps he would have behaved with more delicacy if he had not ſeemed to take notice of her uneaſineſs.

However, as Miſs Amſbury had not the leaſt idea of his having over-heard Sir Charles, ſhe was much leſs diſtreſſed than ſhe would otherwiſe have been.

From

From that houſe, the colonel, who really loved her, and loved her the more for her exquiſite ſenſibility, made uſe of every opportunity to turn it in favour of himſelf, though it was ſome time before he could ſupplant Sir Charles.

While he was thus endeavouring to chear Harriot, Miſs Gilmour, impatient to learn the end of the appointed interview between Sir Charles and her, ſtole into the garden, in order to make obſervations, and paſſed the walk in which the colonel was ſitting and earneſtly talking to her in ſo lover-like a manner, that ſhe began to give up all hopes of him. She was glad, however, that Sir Charles was not ſo employed.

As

As ſhe wandered homewards ſhe met Sir Charles with arms acroſs, and eyes fixed on the ground, in the moſt melancholy attitude to be conceived.

He ſaw her not, but he was thinking on her alone.

As ſhe was pleaſed that he was not with Miſs Amſbury, though ſhe could not tell but that his dejection might be upon her account, ſhe ventured to accoſt him; that his behaviour might diſſipate her doubts; and ſhe accoſted him in a very artful way.

Sir Charles, ſaid ſhe—

He ſtarted at the well-known ſound of her voice, and was the more ſurprized, becauſe the tone of it was unuſually ſoftened.

Madam? replied he, confuſed.

I have

I have loſt my way in this place, ſaid ſhe ſmiling, for I do not know which path leads to the houſe.

Will you accept of me, madam, for a guide? anſwered he, with a look full of tenderneſs.

May I depend upon you? (with an affected timidity) I want to return to Lady Amſbury, and—I have no time to loſe.

You are not going to leave the park to night madam, are you? (with a half-ſuppreſſed ſigh.)

Oh no.—But I ought to beg your pardon, Sir Charles, for thus detaining you from Miſs Amſbury.

You owe me no apology for that, Miſs Gilmour. Would you were but as willing to excuſe your neglect of me, when we were in London.

Neglect

Neglect of you, Sir Charles? If one of us has reaſon to complain of it, I certainly am the perſon. You might, I think, have returned an anſwer to the card which I ſent to you.

The card, Miſs Gilmour? (with an aſtoniſhed aſpect) what card? I received no card; I heard of no card; I——

Come, come, Sir Charles, your denying that you received it is worſe than the meſſage you ſent to me, on the receipt of it. I could not, I own, have thought that Sir Charles Aſtley would have treated me ſo ſlightly.

By all that's dear to me, I never till this moment heard of any card or meſſage from you. There muſt have been ſome ſtrange miſtake. I will inſtantly endeavour to clear it up; if I

ſhould

ſhould be ſo fortunate as to do that, Miſs Gilmour, continued he, looking at her with the moſt beſeeching air, may I hope for your forgiveneſs?

I am afraid you cannot clear it up, ſaid ſhe, with an arch ſmile.

Only give me time to try: I will ſet off for London directly: let me but have the hopes of finding you here at my return; and—

Charlotte, who ſaw by the violence of his emotion that he was innocent of the crime laid to his charge, and was juſt then in a good-humour with him, or was not willing to be without a pretty fellow to make ſoft ſpeeches to her as long as ſhe ſtaid at the park, interrupted him, by ſaying, No—it is not worth a journey to London.

It will be always worth while for me to do every thing to deſerve, at leaſt, your good opinion, madam, ſaid he ſighing, whether I am ſo happy as to obtain it or not.

You grow ſerious, Sir Charles—

I have not been otherwiſe, Madam, ſince the unfortunate moment, when you became indifferent about me.

Indifferent! Lord bleſs me, cried ſhe, affecting a ſurprize, When was I ever otherwiſe?

I really once flattered myſelf, that you were not ſo, Miſs Gilmour, replied he, with a faint ſmile.

Men are monſtrouly apt to miſinterpret our behaviour to them: and if we happen to be commonly civil, fancy we are in love with them in a moment.

I never

I never yet ventured to encourage ſuch agreeable ideas, ſaid he. And, after a little heſitation—When I firſt ſaw Miſs Gilmour, I confeſs that I wiſhed to be one day able to touch her heart. Yet, believe me, madam, if you look back upon our former acquaintance, you will not find that I have preſumed to preſs for the favour of your hand, till I was authorized to do ſo, by being in a ſituation when I might be admitted to ſue for it, at leaſt, among the reſt of your admirers.

Miſs Gilmour threw her eyes upon the ground. She was rather embarraſſed: ſhe did not know what reply to make to this laſt ſpeech. He was convinced that his behaviour had been unexceptionable before he was reſtored to Sir Robert's favour, and was, undoubtedly,

afterwards,

afterwards, of a rank and fortune quite ſufficient to pretend to an alliance with her. She, therefore, ſaid nothing: but yet ſhewed no deſire to put a ſtop to the converſation; for ſhe went to a ſeat at the end of a walk in their way to the houſe, and ſat down, complaining that ſhe had quite fatigued herſelf in trying to find the right path before ſhe met him.

He expreſſed a tender concern, and wiſhed that he had been ſo happy as to have met her before: (looking on her with eyes of love and admiration.)

You are very complaiſant Sir Charles, replied ſhe, to tell me ſo; but even now, perhaps, you are doing penance for it, as I keep you ſo long from Miſs Amſbury, with whom you had an aſſignation.

This

This ſhe artfully hinted at, in order to draw him out to tell her upon what terms he was with that young lady.

My appointment with Miſs Amſbury, madam, ſaid he, was not of a ſerious nature: it was only occaſioned by a little raillery between us about a drawing which her extreme diffidence prevented her from ſhewing publickly, till it was more highly finiſhed.

Oh! then, there muſt be a very particular friendſhip indeed between you, or elſe the lady would not truſt her drawing to your inſpection only.

There is not, I aſſure you, any particular friendſhip between us, Miſs Gilmour: I am a lover of drawing; Miſs Amſbury excells in it: I occaſionally ventured to give her ſome hints, which ſhe very good-naturedly accepted of. I

told her jeſtingly, this morning, that I had a right to ſee firſt what ſhe had confeſſed was entirely copied from one of my deſigns. You was yourſelf a witneſs of her diſinclination to oblige me; a diſinclination not yet got over, as I have not ſeen it, nor do I intend to aſk for it again. Miſs Amſbury is extremely amiable, and as her brother's gueſt has always treated me with the greateſt politeneſs and conſideration, but ſolely on that account; unleſs the benevolence of her diſpoſition might have rendered her deſirous to divert the melancholy which has been very viſible in me, ever ſince I was ſo unfortunate as to incur your diſpleaſure.

A deep ſigh here prevented him from proceeding, with which, and his plaintive

plaintive tender voice and manner, Charlotte began to be melted. Next to Sir Edward Balchen he had been, of all men, her favourite: though gay and giddy herſelf, ſhe liked the gentle ſeriouſneſs of Aſtley's temper.

There is not a more common obſervation than that the two ſexes generally chuſe oppoſites both in perſon and diſpoſitions. Charlotte had always found ſomething in Sir Charles that pleaſed her, but ſhe could have liked him better, had he not ſpoken ſo very handſomely of Miſs Amſbury. Like a true woman, that is like a woman who is vain of her perſon, and fond of admiration, ſhe weakly thought by leſſening the merits of another, ſhe increaſed her own. But here there was a little jealouſy mixed with the other paſſions.

She was ſtruck with the great improvement in Sir Charles's manner, ſince her firſt acquaintance with him. She really loved him, though, from being but little acquainted with the tender paſſion, ſhe ſcarce knew whether ſhe did or not: and if ſhe had been quite ſure that ſhe did, ſhe would have been a good deal vexed with herſelf, at leaſt till ſhe was abſolutely certain that ſhe alone reigned in his heart. She took no notice, however, of the profound ſigh which he did not endeavour to ſuppreſs. They were conſequently ſilent for ſome time: but when ſhe roſe up to go, he took her hand, and gently ſeating her again, You complained of being weary, Miſs Gilmour, ſaid he, you cannot be reſted yet. Let me make uſe of this moment (may it be a favourable

favourable one) to beg you would liſten to me. Let me intreat you to tell me, with all the freedom imaginable, what it was that offended you, when I waited on you in town? Would you alſo deign to inform me, by what methods I might hope for your future favour, I ſhould think no taſk too difficult to be executed in order to obtain an heart ſo valuable, ſo very dear to me, ſo very neceſſary to my peace, as yours.

During this addreſs, Sir Charles threw himſelf at Miſs Gilmour's feet, and, when he had cloſed his ſpeech, held one of her hands, which ſhe did not attempt to take from him. Starting up on a ſudden, with a pleaſure very viſible in her eyes, for ſhe was really rejoiced in her heart to ſee him

ſtill ſo thoroughly attached to her, Come, get up Aſtley, cried ſhe, ſmiling on him, I muſt go now: Lady Amſbury will wonder what is become of me.

You will not, you cannot go, ſaid ſaid he, riſing to ſtop her, and leave me thus in deſpair: only ſay, that you will, in time, be mine; that you will allow me to hope ſo at leaſt, and permit me to wait on Mr. Gilmour and Mr. Elrington to intreat them to encourage my hopes.

Oh! Heavens! cried ſhe, what a fuſs and buſtle you want to make about me! Indeed, Sir Charles — looking gravely—you grow very ridiculous, and have a mind to make me as much ſo as yourſelf: but I ſhall not agree to that.

Only

Only then agree to my waiting on Mr. Gilmour. When I have brought him over to my ſide, I ſhall hope that you will one day conſent—

Lord! there is ſomething ſo formal and ſtupid in all theſe affairs, when they once come to be ſerious, which I can never be brought to endure. Beſides, you are in ſuch a hurry, I hardly know whether I like you or not. Poſitively, Aſtley, I muſt have time to conſider.

Charming vivacity! ſaid he, looking at her paſſionately, you ſhall have as much time to conſider as you pleaſe: only in return, give me leave to love you while you are thinking about it.

Lord! what an abſurd ſpeech is that now, as if you could help it?

Indeed, indeed I cannot, ſaid he, ſmiling at her lively ſpirits, and I am very glad that you are convinced that I cannot—that will, I hope, induce you to pity me.

Pity you! cried ſhe, laughing. Let me die if I ſee any thing in you which calls for my compaſſion. You have no great occaſion to be diſſatisfied with yourſelf, and I fancy you by this time begin to have no violent reaſon to be diſcontented with my behaviour to you. Have you Aſtley? continued ſhe, with a half-languiſhing air.

No, my lovely angel, ſaid he, preſſing her hand to his lips. Never, never will I be diſcontented, while you liſten to me, and look thus pleaſed on me. Only give me your permiſſion to wait on Mr. Gilmour.

And

And ſo I am to be forced into my conſent, by my father at laſt?

No, my deareſt Charlotte, you ſhall never be forced: you ſhall not be obliged by me, to do any thing diſagreeable to yourſelf. Let me but have Mr. Gilmour's ſanction, and then I will patiently wait your own time.

Pſhaw! how you love to be ſilly, Sir Charles! Well, I can't hear any more about ſuch nonſenſe at preſent. I ſhall go and dine at my uncle Elrington's to-morrow.

May I have your leave, my Charlotte, to wait on you there?

No—that will be impertinent: but if you behave as I like, till to-morrow, which is a million to one—why—may be—I may let you meet me there in the evening. But then, poſitively, I

will not be teazed, Aſtley, (withdrawing her hand which he had ſeized) I will have my own way in every thing: and if you are tolerably obedient, 'tis poſſible that I may not be violently obſtinate.

In this wild way did ſhe continue to treat him; ſometimes laughing at him, ſometimes laughing with him: ſhe often affected to laugh at him in order to diſguiſe an inclination which ſhe really found gaining ground, and which ſhe did not care to diſcover in its full extent.

She went, as ſhe ſaid ſhe would, the very next day to dine with Mr. Elrington, and found Miſs Belladen preparing, by the advice of the phyſicians and her friends, to go to Briſtol for her health.

Mrs.

Mrs. Gilbert, the lady formerly mentioned as the friend of Miſs Belladen's mother, had kindly offered to attend her in company with Mr. Weſtbury: If ſhe found benefit by that little tour, they were to be united ſoon after their return.

Mr. Elrington ſpared his niece the confuſion ſhe might have felt in mentioning her lover. He ſpoke of him firſt, and in terms which ſufficiently diſcovered his entire approbation of him—adding, that neither ſhe nor Sir Charles ought ever to forget the obligations they were under to Sir Edward Balchen, upon his kind interpoſition in the young gentleman's favour: and indeed enlarged ſo much in Sir Edward's praiſe, that Miſs Gilmour, who had not heartily forgiven him, for hav-

ing preferred Myra to her, nor for the diſcovery which he had made to her uncle of her connection with Aſtley, gave a turn to the converſation.

However, before her lover arrived, this worthy man adviſed her to let her father know of his addreſſes, and by no means to encourage them without his conſent.

Why that is the very thing Sir Charles is continually teazing me about: he worries me for leave to apply to my father.

And if you entertain any ſentiments in his favour, replied Mr. Elrington, let him have your immediate leave. He has ſhewn both his love and his integrity: he has already made you an offer of his heart: let him now, if you intend to be ſerious, make himſelf

and

and his propoſals acceptable to thoſe who have a right to be conſulted in every thing that regards your future eſtabliſhment.

Charlotte anſwered by turning up her lip and her eyes. As ſhe probably never intended to be ſerious, ſhe made no promiſe of that kind: but when Sir Charles waited upon Mr. Elrington in the evening, that gentleman received him very cordially, and adviſed him to make intereſt with Mr. Gilmour directly, if Charlotte did not abſolutely forbid him.

Sir Charles directed the moſt tender glances towards her, as if to implore her aſſent; and finding that ſhe only laughed at him, and rallied him, told her that he ſhould implicitly follow Mr. Elrington's moſt friendly advice,

and

and take the liberty of waiting on Mr. Gilmour the very next day.

Ah! cried ſhe, affectedly, My dear dear uncle, into what a precious ſituation have I brought myſelf by this viſit to you to-day? But I did not think, indeed, that you would have been ſo peremptorily againſt me, and in favour of that—

What pretty whimſical name is ſhe ſtudying to give you now, Sir Charles? ſaid Mr. Elrington laughing, But take care my dear child, when once he comes to be your lord and maſter, that he does not retaliate.

Oh! horrid! I ſhall never endure to be obedient indeed ſir, I have not the leaſt notion of obedience.

Why truly I believe you have not, ſaid the good Mr. Elrington.

And you never ſhall know what it is, my deareſt Miſs Gilmour, with me, ſaid Sir Charles. You ſhall ever be your own miſtreſs, as entirely as you are at this moment: let me only be your huſband, your happy, your delighted huſband. (Seizing her hand and rapturouſly kiſſing it.)

Oh! for Heaven's ſake don't be ſo violent, cried ſhe, I am ſure that Mr. Elrington will not ſupport you upon ſuch conditions.

My Charlotte ſhall name her own conditions—I will ever moſt willingly ſubſcribe to them.

Convey me then ſafely back to Amſbury park; and take care not to be impertinent by the way.

Sir Charles then conducted her into Lord Amſbury's chariot, which waited

to

to carry her home, and made ſuch good uſe of his time that ſhe conſented to let him pay a viſit to Mr. Gilmour the next day.

In about a week, Sir Charles returned with Mr. Gilmour's approbation, if his daughter had no objection.

The lively Charlotte, after having trifled, not a little, with her lover, but ſtill in ſuch a manner as to let him ſee that he had really no ſmall influence over her, gave her promiſe to be his, and began to make all neceſſary preparations for the day which he had ſo long deſired: ſhe returning to her father's houſe, and he to London, where he found her card among others which had been ſent to him during his abſence, and, upon enquiry, heard the anſwer that Sir Edward had ordered the ſervant to ſend back. He

He was much pleaſed to find that his admired Charlotte had regard enough for him both to ſend to, and to come after him. But when he viſited her at her father's, laid the fault upon his ſervant, not chuſing to blame Sir Edward, for whom he retained the ſincereſt gratitude and eſteem. Surprized, however, he very much was, that he had not received one anſwer to the ſeveral letters which he had written to him: and upon calling at his houſe in Groſvenor-Square, was told that he had been for ſome time out of town. As the ſervants had private orders to ſay that they did not know whither he was gone, Sir Charles imagined that he was making a tour round the county, and left a letter to be conveyed to him by the firſt opportunity; the

ſervant

ſervant in town immediately carried it to him.

Sir Edward, whoſe mind had long been uneaſy, met with a little incident in his preſent neighbourhood which did not tend to make him happier than he was before diſpoſed to be.

Returning home from a walk which he had been taking very early, in order to enjoy the coolneſs of the morning, he heard, within a few paces of his habitation, a female voice ſcream pretty loudly, and ſoon diſcovered, as he advanced, a very beautiful young woman ſtruggling with a couple of livery-ſervants, who ſtrove to force her to go back with them, excuſing the rudeneſs of their behaviour, by ſaying that their lady, her mother, would be diſtracted if ſhe did not go home. And would

you throw ſo good, ſo kind a mamma, ſaid the moſt ſenſible of the two fellows, into ſo much affliction on your account?

Miſs Brandon, that was the young lady's name, replied with much vehemence, that ſhe never would go home; and declared with the moſt ſolemn expreſſions, that if they carried her thither by force ſhe would ſeize the firſt opportunity to make her eſcape again.

Sir Edward, at firſt ſight of her, had advanced to the two ſervants, and ordered them to unhand the lady immediately. They inſtantly obeyed, well-knowing the perſon who ſpoke to them.

Sir Edward, then addreſſed Miſs Brandon herſelf, who was quite a ſtranger to him, and aſked her the reaſon of this

this apparent inſult to her; and begged to be informed why ſhe refuſed to go home to her mother.

Oh, ſir, cried the diſconſolate girl, burſting into a flood of tears, If you have leiſure to liſten to my ſtory, you may perhaps, as a neighbour, and an unbiaſſed perſon, prevail on my mamma to ſoften the extreme rigour of her behaviour to me, which, alone, could have obliged me to take a ſtep, which is, I am very ſenſible, ſo unbecoming in one of my ſex and appearance. We muſt certainly, continued ſhe, be known to you, ſir, as my mother's houſe is next to that in which you lodge. Her fortune is large, and though, ſince my father's death which happened about two years ago, ſhe has lived in this retired way, ſhe has ſpared no expence for

my

my education, and has treated me with the greateſt affection till within theſe few weeks. Upon my refuſing to admit the addreſſes of Sir Thomas Williams, ſhe threatened me ſeverely: and though I have tried every method to mollify her in my favour, and aſſured her in the ſtrongeſt manner, that nothing but miſery muſt be my lot if ſhe compels me to marry him; and though I have alſo aſſured her that if ſhe will but have the goodneſs to let me refuſe a man with whom I never can be happy, I will never engage myſelf, without her conſent, to any other, yet ſhe has vowed that I ſhall be his, in ſpite of all my prayers and tears, becauſe ſhe is it ſeems under a neceſſity of paying a large penalty to him by agreement,

agreement, if ſhe does not keep her promiſe to him.

Thus diſtreſſed ſir, continued Miſs Brandon, I knew not to what means I ſhould have recourſe to diſentangle myſelf from a ſituation ſo very terrifying, but to ſet out early this morning to a diſtant relation in town, before I was miſſed, which relation would, I thought, entertain me till both ſhe and I could prevail on my mother not to make her only child wretched for the ſake of a little money. But my mother, ever-watchful, and fearful of my eloping, I ſuppoſe, heard me go out, and ſent her ſervants to drag me back again. This ſir, is the real cauſe of my appearing to you in this awkward, unfavourable light: but I ſhould alſo, continued ſhe, ſtill weeping, have told

told you, that I have frequently offered to advance the ſum which my mother has promiſed to forfeit on my refuſing Sir Thomas, out of my own fortune, which will be not inconſiderable, and which will be in my own hands when I come of age, that is, four years hence.

During this little narrative, which, though it was delivered with ſeveral breaks, and frequently interrupted with ſighs and tears, and thereby rendered ſometimes ſcarcely intelligible, was delivered with a genuine ſimplicity which made the fair narrator a deſervedly-pitiable object in the eyes of Sir Edward—beſides, he had an opportunity of beholding one of the moſt lovely female figures, perhaps, that he had ever ſeen.

Miſs

Miſs Brandon was tall and elegant in her make: her complexion, which was of the moſt dazling white, received no ſmall advantage from the fine colouring of her cheeks and lips, which hardly could be equalled. Her eyes were dark, yet languiſhing, and ſhaded by the moſt beautiful fringes of ſhining auburn hair imaginable. Her noſe and mouth were extremely well formed, and her teeth were remarkably white and even. To all theſe regular beauties were ſuper-added, an expreſſion of innocence and tenderneſs in her countenance, and a modeſt dignity which ſtruck at firſt ſight every beholder with pleaſure.

The part of her neck, which was expoſed to view was very alluring: for, in ſtriving to get looſe, her cloak had

had fallen off, together with her hat, ſo that her lovely hair hung over her face and increaſed the brightneſs of her complexion. Her gloves were alſo torn from the handſomeſt arms in the world.

Her perſonal charms, the melting tones of her melodious voice, and the different attitudes in which ſhe appeared while ſhe told her melancholy tale, with the tears which copiouſly ſtreamed from her eyes, all one would have imagined, muſt have touched every perſon who ſaw and who heard her, with admiration, at leaſt, if not with more tender ſenſations.

Sir Edward, when ſhe had ceaſed to ſpeak, addreſſed her with all the ſoothing compaſſion in his power, and offered his ſervice to protect her to the re-

lation whom ſhe had mentioned, till her mother could be prevailed upon to liſten to her intreaties, or to conduct her himſelf to her mother, and to make uſe of every argument he was maſter of to bring about a reconciliation between them.

The young lady was juſt going to declare her readineſs to accept of his firſt offer, when her mother appeared, haſtily coming up to them, quite out of breath, both with paſſion and precipitation.

Let go my daughter, let go my child this inſtant ſir, cried ſhe, (taking hold of Sir Edward's arm, the hand of which he had offered to Miſs Brandon, in order to conduct her whitherſoever ſhe choſe to be eſcorted) and do you, poor deluded girl, come home with me. Who,

ſir,

ſir, ought to be the guardian, the protectreſs of her own child, but her mother, who has ſpared no pains, no cares to make her happy, and who has no other views, no other deſigns but to ſettle her advantageouſly?

But, my dear madam, replied Sir Edward, who immediately reſigned the young lady's hand to her mother, tho' I have till now been a ſtranger to you, and to your daughter, give me leave to wait on you home with her, that I may hear from your mouth, alſo, the cauſe of this diſagreeable event.

What, what, interrupted Mrs. Brandon haſtily, has ſhe been gaining you over to her party already? Has ſhe had time and courage to ſpeak to a ſtranger againſt her mother, a mother who has known no care but for her?

Oh! Sir Edward, and could you liſten to ſuch a ſhameful tale, and from ſuch a girl as this?

The diſtreſs of the young lady, madam, ſaid he, and her appearance, dragged along by two fellows who, however deſerving they may be as your domeſticks, ought not certainly to be ſuffered to treat ſuch a delicate form ſo roughly, would have affected any body with the leaſt feeling.

My mamma, my deareſt mamma, cried Miſs Brandon, who had only ſhed more tears upon her mother's coming up to them, only hear me, hear me but one word.

I will hear no more Suſy, ſaid her enraged mother: I have already heard but too much. But you will repent of this monſtrous piece of indiſcretion,

I aſſure

I aſſure you, before the day's at an end.

As they had not far to go they ſoon arrived at Mrs. Brandon's: puſhing her daughter in before her, Come Sir Edward, ſaid ſhe, come in, and let me alſo be heard as well as my daughter.

Sir Edward readily followed them into the houſe. The beauty and diſtreſs of the young lady had moved his compaſſion: the looks and manners of her mother had not leſſened it.

Mrs. Brandon was a large, coarſe figure. She had once been handſome, and might ſtill have been called a ſhowy woman, had there been the leaſt appearance of delicacy in her behaviour. Allowances, indeed, were to be made for her ſurprize and her anger, by which paſſions ſhe had been hurried out of

her houſe, and was conſequently not prepared to conduct herſelf with much decorum: her voice was loud and ſhrill: her whole carriage was altogether both violent and diſguſting to the laſt degree: her dreſs too was ſo entirely looſe and unbecoming, that to Sir Edward, who was ſo remarkable an admirer of elegant ſimplicity, ſhe was a moſt ſhocking figure.

When they were all in the parlour ſhe told Sir Edward, after a tedious preamble, how much ſhe loved her only child, and what pains ſhe had taken to give her a proper education. After having rejected ſeveral offers, continued ſhe, I pitched upon the moſt advantageous and agreeable one, as the gentleman has a title, and a fortune ſuperior to my daughter's, and is in love

love with her to diſtraction: but the perverſe gipſy will not liſten to him, nor hear of him.

Here a flood of tears, which did not ſeem to come from her very readily, interrupted her. She then went on thus:—

Upon my expoſtulating with the girl upon the monſtrous abſurdity in refuſing ſuch a deſirable offer, ſhe has thought fit to endeavour to run away from me; but, thank Heaven, I have ſtopped her in time: and I will make her know what power a mother has over a child in ſuch a caſe.

This detail, was frequently interrupted by burſts of paſſion, and threatening looks at her daughter, who ſat down upon a ſopha, during the recital of

it, and hid her face with her handkerchief.

When Mrs. Brandon had ceaſed to ſpeak, though ſhe did not ſeem willing to be ſilent, Sir Edward deſired her to compoſe herſelf, and to give him leave to aſk her if ſhe thought that her approbation alone, of the perſon whom ſhe had ſingled out for her ſon-in-law, was ſufficient; and if ſhe did not imagine that Miſs Brandon was equally concerned in it. Our inclinations, continued he, are not always in our own power: and to be obliged to marry a perſon entirely diſagreeable to us, is certainly to be in the moſt hateful ſituation. How particularly ſhocking muſt it be to a young lady to be forced by ſo near a relation as a mother, into a connection with the man, whom ſhe from

from her heart abhors? I beg, therefore, that you will give yourſelf a little time to conſider, before you inſiſt upon Miſs Brandon's accepting of him, to whom ſhe has diſcovered ſo great an averſion. I cannot believe that a young lady ſo well educated, and apparently ſo amiable, would refuſe to make her mother happy by conſenting to the completion of her wiſhes, if ſhe was not ſingularly circumſtanced, if ſhe had not a particular objection.

Mrs. Brandon, who from the firſt, ſeeing Sir Edward intereſt himſelf in her daughter's favour, began to fancy that he was charmed with her perſonal attractions, which were really very engaging, and who, obſerving the warmth with which he took her ſide of the queſtion, was confirmed in her conjec-

tures, immediately conceived an intention to fix him entirely, and interrupted him here, by ſaying, Objection? there could be no objection till you came to live next door to us. Ever ſince ſhe has ſeen you, truly, ſhe cannot endure the ſight of Sir Thomas.

My dear mamma! cried the young lady, covered with bluſhes, which were almoſt ſucceeded by a death-like paleneſs.—She fell back motionleſs in her ſeat.

Inſtead of offering to fly to her aſſiſtance, Mrs. Brandon went on, giving a very fulſome account of her daughter's being ſo charmed with his perſon: Sir Edward in the mean time, who pitied the young lady extremely, for being under the care of ſuch a mother, endeavoured to reſtore her to life.

She

She at laſt opened her eyes, throwing them languiſhingly on Sir Edward.

Ay, ay, ſaid Mrs. Brandon, I thought where it would end: but ſir, notwithſtanding you are a handſome man, I am not to be juggled out of my daughter: I ſhall loſe a very conſiderable ſum by her refuſing Sir Thomas.

My dear madam, ſaid Miſs Brandon, ſhocked to death at her mother's behaviour: ſpare me, O ſpare me a little.

Indeed ſir, continued ſhe, turning to Sir Edward, I am not the girl my mother repreſents me to be. She is miſtaken: indeed ſhe is. Only hear me madam, throwing herſelf at her feet.

None of your nonſenſical, romantic airs to me miſs, cried the furious wo-

man—get up and go to your apartment this minute.

The poor girl tremblingly obeyed her, but not without the moſt viſible reluctance.—As ſoon as ſhe was out of ſight, Mrs. Brandon told Sir Edward, that, notwithſtanding her fainting and nonſenſe, ſhe had refuſed Sir Thomas meerly upon his account, and that ſhe had bound herſelf to pay him two thouſand pounds, if the marriage did not take place.

Sir Edward, though very much ſurprized at being addreſſed in the manner he was by Mrs. Brandon, was much more diſturbed on Miſs Brandon's account than on his own. He ſaw the confuſion ſhe was in; and though there was ſomething in her looks which diſcovered a kind of prejudice in his favour,

vour, yet was he far from imagining what her mother had ſo very indiſcreetly and openly declared it to be. As he was not, however, apt to be diſconcerted, he replied to Mrs. Brandon, I ſuppoſe, madam, the ſum is not to be forfeited except you yourſelf refuſe your conſent: your daughter, I imagine is free to reject Sir Thomas.

No, indeed ſir, ſhe is not, replied the lady: but I will tell you what Sir Edward: the girl is, you ſee, a fine girl, and I ſee you are taken with her. I am no novice in love-matters: I preſently find out people: ſhe is, as I told you, deſperately in love with you, and if you like her, why pay me theſe two thouſand pounds and take her.

If Sir Edward had been ſurprized at this ſtrange woman before, he was certainly

certainly not leſs ſo at this very abrupt propoſal. His uſual preſence of mind, however, did not forſake him. Looking at her very ſeriouſly, And would you really, madam, ſaid he, ſell your child? A woman of your fortune?

Sell her? Lord bleſs me! why you cannot call my taking the money of you to pay Sir Thomas ſelling her?

I do indeed, replied he: it can be looked upon in no other light. However, madam, were I inclined to make ſuch a purchaſe, I ſhould chuſe to have a little converſation with the lady firſt. Give me leave to ſee her for a few moments alone, and I will then give you my anſwer.

Alone? ſaid ſhe; why really I don't know whether I ought to truſt a young thing ſo much in love, with ſo fine a young fellow.

You

You may ſee us if you pleaſe all the time, replied he bluntly, provided you are not within hearing.

Lord! well, you are an odd creature to be ſure, but handſome fellows will be particular.

She then rang the bell, and ordered the ſervant to call Suſy down.

Poor Miſs Brandon appeared pale and trembling. Sir Edward could make out little to the purpoſe from the unaccountable ramblings of her mother; but much wanted to know upon what terms they actually lived together, and endeavoured to comfort and encourage her.

He led her to a chair, and ſeating himſelf in another by her, was obliged more than once, to call upon Mrs. Brandon for the performance of her promiſe,

promiſe, who, at laſt, left them by themſelves.

When ſhe went out of the room, he cloſed the door after her, but made no effort to faſten it; and ſhe having tried whether it was, retired into the next parlour.

Sir Edward then intreated Miſs Brandon to tell him freely her ſituation, aſſuring her that he moſt earneſtly deſired to bring her mother, if poſſible, to hear reaſon.

The young lady, upon this, declared that Sir Thomas had long viſited at their houſe, but that while he did not behave particular to her, ſhe thought ſhe had no right to make objections to him tho' he was reckoned a downright gameſter. Within a few months, continued ſhe, he has profeſſed an inclination for me: and

and my mother has told me that I muſt look upon him as my huſband. From the firſt mention of this propoſal, I have with tears intreated my mother not to think of marrying me to a man ſo very diſagreeable to me. She was not ſo peremptory about my conſent till about a fortnight ago, when I found that ſhe had loſt two thouſand pounds to him at play. This debt, which ſhe was unwilling to diſcharge, Sir Thomas declared he would freely acquit her of, upon her agreeing to give him her daughter directly. To this ſort of payment ſhe has aſſented, and though I have, on my knees, ſeveral times implored her not to ſacrifice me, aſſuring her that I would give her any bond, or be any way anſwerable for paying the money when I came of age, ſhe will not

not ſave me from a man whom I cannot love: all my tears and prayers have been to no purpoſe. She ſwears ſolemnly that I ſhall be his before the end of the week. This determination of hers drove me ſir, I confeſs, to take an imprudent ſtep which I hope, when you reflect upon the danger I was in, and the fright into which I was thrown, will apologize for my conduct.

She ended as ſhe began, with tears, and with thanking him for interpoſing ſo fortunately in her favour.

I have no friends in the world, added ſhe, to prevail on my mother to alter her reſolution: if I had, ſhe is not, I am afraid, capable of liſtening to them.

Sir Edward, after having endeavoured to comfort her, aſked her if ſhe had no guardian: if her mother had any

perſon

perſon joined with her in truſt for the care of her fortune.

No, ſir, nobody—I am totally in her power till I am of age; then I ſhall be, by my father's will, poſſeſſed of twenty thouſand pounds.

Sir Edward made a polite excuſe for the trouble which he had given her, which he ſaid was only with a view to be ſerviceable to her: and then, leading her into her mother, deſired half an hour's converſation with her by herſelf.

Mrs. Brandon ſeemed to be not diſpleaſed with this requeſt, hoping that he was going to propoſe terms. After ſhe had, therefore, ſent her daughter up to her own apartment, Well, Sir Edward, ſaid ſhe, with a wanton kind of ſmile, and how do you like my girl?

Is ſhe not a lovely one? Is ſhe not worth more than two thouſand pounds to the man for whom ſhe is dying?

She ought to be worth infinitely more, madam, to her mother—ſo fine, ſo well-diſpoſed a young lady.

Yes, yes, ſhe is mighty well diſpoſed to run away from her own mother: but, I ſuppoſe, ſhe will not be ſo ready to run from the man ſhe is ſo fond of.

You are greatly miſtaken in Miſs Brandon, madam: ſhe only wiſhes not to be obliged to marry a man who is not agreeable to her. She has no particular attachment to any man: do you yourſelf chuſe one worthy of her, and agreeable to her, and ſhe will, I am certain, immediately obey you.

What, and loſe my two thouſand pounds? No, no, ſir, I know better

things—

things—pay me down the money, and the girl's your own. I will give my conſent under my hand. You hum and haw about it: methinks ſuch a ſweet young creature, with ſuch a fortune, as ſhe will have twenty thouſand pounds which I cannot hinder her of, need not puzzle you ſo.

You would not wiſh to do it, I hope, madam: nor do I wiſh for Miſs Brandon, all-lovely as ſhe is. My heart, my ſoul is engaged already, I cannot therefore be her purchaſer: and I am aſtoniſhed, and ſhocked beyond expreſſion, to hear a parent, of her own ſex too, who ought to be all affection, all maternal love, even hint at ſuch a thing. Only conſider, madam, how you expoſe, how you depreciate yourſelf by ſo unnatural, ſo horrid a propoſal. You

cannot

cannot be ſuppoſed to want money, but if you did, you ſhould beg, borrow, do any thing but make a mercenary diſpoſal of your child; a child rendered ſo infinitely defenceleſs by the delicacy of her ſex and age, and ſtill more by the extreme beauty of her perſon.

To theſe arguments, and many others which he made uſe of, ſhe only anſwered by outrage and raving againſt her daughter, and ſometimes againſt him for refuſing her.

Finding at length that all his perſuaſions had no effect, and that ſhe only grew louder and louder, that ſhe vowed alſo that her daughter ſhould, in leſs than two days be Lady Williams; he, after a moment's pauſe, told her that he would pay the ſum down

which

which ſhe demanded, provided ſhe would enter into a bond with him, never to force her daughter's inclinations again.

Can you be ſo generous, Sir Edward? ſaid ſhe.

I can, if you will give me leave to be ſo.

What, and not marry her? Well! you are a moſt extraordinary man: but take notice, Sir Edward, that I never will let you remove her from me, unleſs you will marry her immediately. I have ſome regard for the honour of my girl.

Inconſiſtent woman! exclaimed Sir Edward, half-aloud: then, turning to her, I will bring my attorney, madam, with me this afternoon, to ſettle this affair; but in the mean time, remember that

that you do not endeavour to put the leaſt force upon Miſs Brandon's inclination.

He then walked off, and diſpatched his ſervant to town, for the perſon whoſe aſſiſtance he wanted.

This uncommon exertion of Sir Edward's generoſity may appear rather odd, nay incredible to ſome people who are ſtrangers to that heart-ennobling virtue: but Sir Edward Balchen, totally different from ſuch ſelfiſh characters, was naturally both compaſſionate and benevolent: his compaſſion was excited by the beauty and diſtreſs of Miſs Brandon, his benevolence prompted him to reſcue her from the power of an abandoned woman, who, for the ſake of gratifying a ſordid paſſion, would have given up her child to wretchedneſs.

Long

Long had he not ſat contemplating the ſtrange adventure in which he had that morning been engaged, when the door of his parlour was opened, and in ruſhed Miſs Brandon. Throwing herſelf at his feet, while the tears ſtreamed from her eyes, ſhe caught his hand, and preſſed it to her lips with an eloquent expreſſion of gratitude and love not to be deſcribed.

Sir Edward, now ſtill more aſtoniſhed than he was before, at ſeeing this lovely girl in ſuch an affecting ſituation, raiſed her from the ground, and deſired to know what had happened ſince he left them, to occaſion ſuch violent emotions.

Oh! ſir, cried the poor girl, with a voice ſcarcely intelligible, what have I done to deſerve ſuch amazing gene-

roſity? You have ſaved me from deſtruction: but you have ſaved me, only to deſtroy me with your goodneſs, added ſhe, ſobbing aloud.—It is too much to bear—I cannot repay you—I cannot make you any, not the leaſt return. You have put it out of my power continued ſhe, bluſhing like ſcarlet, to make you any return. I have only one favour to aſk, which you muſt not deny me. When your lawyer comes, let him take alſo a note from me, for my repaying the ſum advanced as ſoon as I receive my fortune. Do not deny me this favour Sir Edward; I cannot bear to be under ſuch vaſt obligations to a man whom I would oblige at the expence of my life.

With theſe words ſhe broke from him, (for he had taken her hand to

ſooth

ſooth and calm her mind) and ran out of the houſe.

Sir Edward was extremely diſconcerted at this ſecond interview with Miſs Brandon. It was now very plain that her mother was at leaſt right, when ſhe had told him, that her daughter was in love with him. Every look, every action ſhewed that ſhe was actually ſo, in the greateſt degree: and few men of Sir Edward Balchen's age and conſtitution, even with their affections deeply engaged, eſpecially if they had no hopes of arriving at the fruition of their wiſhes, could have reſiſted ſo very lovely a young creature, unable to conceal her tenderneſs.

He ſaw, but he was loth to ſee her partiality towards him. Yet his heart, ever alive to the woes of others, felt

for her: and when he reflected on the moving attitude into which ſhe had thrown herſelf, the mournful, affecting expreſſions in her beautiful countenance, her broken accents, and riſing ſighs, he wiſhed to relieve the anxiety under which ſhe laboured.

In the evening of that day he ſettled every thing with her mother, accord- to his agreement with her: and the young lady, who was become more compoſed, came down and intreated Sir Edward to permit her to be his debtor till ſhe was of age.

Mrs. Brandon called her daughter fool, and Sir Edward would on no account accept of any acknowledgment of that kind.

He was not a little touched with Miſs Brandon's behaviour, which, though

modeſt,

modeſt, was tender, and returned home penſive; wiſhing that his beloved Myra had been but as ſuſceptible of his paſſion for her as this charming girl appeared to be of a paſſion for him, without his having taken one ſtep to gain her affection.

He cloſed not his eyes all night. The different fair ones preſented themſelves alternately to his imagination.

He had but juſt fallen into a ſlumber, about the uſual hour at which he roſe in the morning, when he was awaked by a knocking at the next door. The houſe ſeemed to be in an uncommon buſtle, which increaſed ſo much that all thoughts of reſt were precluded by it. He, therefore, roſe immediately, and upon enquiring into the occaſion of ſo much diſturbance, was informed

that Mrs. Brandon had been ſeized in the night with a fit which deprived her for ſome time of her ſenſes: that they had returned for a few moments, but that they did not permit her to ſay any thing of conſequence to Miſs Brandon, who had never left her: and that her ſecond fit had carried her off about eight in the morning, though ſhe had all the medical aſſiſtance that could be ſo ſuddenly procured for her.

Before Sir Edward had time to reflect upon the ſudden exit of this ſtrange woman, a meſſage came from the young lady, begging to ſee him.

He obeyed the ſummons, though he, at that moment, wiſhed to have been excuſed.

She appeared to be, and really was, in a great deal of trouble: harraſſed and

and terrified at this melancholy and unexpected event. Though her mother had not always behaved to her like one, ſhe was ſtill her mother; and had ſhe not been ſo nearly related to her, her death muſt have appeared ſhocking.

She received Sir Edward with great reſpect, and, after having modeſtly apologized for taking ſuch a liberty with a gentleman who was almoſt a ſtranger to her, told him that ſhe was encouraged to hope from his having already been ſo generous as to intereſt himſelf in her affairs, that he would then favour her with his advice; as ſhe was certain that a man who had behaved ſo nobly to her muſt be the propereſt perſon to conſult, as ſhe was unfortunately left without friends.

My poor unhappy mother, ſir, ſaid ſhe, you have ſeen. It would pain my heart, and it would, I think, affect yours too ſenſibly, at this time eſpecially, were I to enter into every thing relating to this melancholy affair: all that I will trouble you with is this: my father's relations would never be brought to approve of his marriage: he therefore never kept up any friendſhip with them afterwards, excepting the lady alone to whom, I told you, I was going. She is a widow, but not in the moſt affluent circumſtances: my mother had no relations whom ſhe could properly introduce to my father; but whom ſhe, nevertheleſs, aſſiſted while they lived; and he permitted her to be kind to them: but as their manner of living was, I am afraid, of no credit

credit to any body, nor any advantage to themſelves, the loſs of them was not to be regretted. Thus ſituated, without a perſon in the world whom I can truſt, and liable to be deceived and impoſed upon by every creature about me, what can I do ſir? Will you not add to the goodneſs which you have already ſhewed me, continued ſhe, looking down and ſighing, by informing me how I ought to act in ſo diſtreſsful a ſituation?

Here ſhe ſtopped, while tears flowed a pace down her beautiful cheeks.

Sir Edward was extremely affected by the helpleſs ſituation in which this lovely young creature was left; and the more ſo as her very youth and beauty ſubjected her to a thouſand inconveniences, and expoſed her to a thouſand

dangers. Her large fortune was an additional diſadvantage to her, as ſhe had no perſon to aſſiſt nor to direct her properly in the management of it. Poſſeſſed, indeed, ſhe was of a good natural underſtanding, but it had received little or no improvement, tho' what is called a polite education had been beſtowed upon her: that is, ſhe had been inſtructed in drawing, dancing, French and muſic: but theſe ornamental parts of education are far from being deſirable, unleſs the inſtructed are alſo taught how and when to make uſe of them.

Miſs Brandon had a very good heart: for that very reaſon ſhe was the more likely to become a prey to the firſt perſon who had addreſs enough to impoſe upon her. Sir Edward, therefore,

fore, endeavoured to chear and comfort her; yet he wiſhed that he had not been the man pitched upon for that purpoſe. He ſaw that he was by no means indifferent to her: he pitied her, he could do no more. Each look, each word, every ſigh, every tear now all embarraſſed him: under this embarraſſment he prudently reſolved to ſee her as ſeldom as poſſible: but then, her moving intreaties to him, only to be her friend, only to adviſe her what was beſt for her to do, to guard againſt thoſe who might ſeek to deceive her, hurt him beyond deſcription, though he ſtrove to conceal the uneaſineſs which he felt.

Before he left the houſe, however, he perſuaded her to quit it, and to go and ſtay with her father's relation in

town, if ſhe was a woman of character, or elſe to take a houſe or a creditable apartment, and deſire this lady to live with her.

She ſighed deeply at his propoſal: at the thoughts of removing herſelf from his neighbourhood: but, after a moment's recollection, ſhe owned the propriety of his propoſal, and told him that ſhe would comply with it: But then, added ſhe, with a ſupplicating air, will you not ſee me ſometimes? Will you not have the goodneſs to ſee me placed in a reputable family? I know nobody: conſider, only conſider ſir, the danger I am in of falling into bad hands.

He begged her to make herſelf eaſy, to ſend immediately for her friend, and to deſire her to fetch her away from that melancholy houſe. I will do every thing

thing in my power, continued he, to aſſiſt you in the arrangement of your affairs, but you cannot, with any propriety, Miſs Brandon, receive very frequent viſits from gentlemen who are in no ſhape related to you.

She bluſhed like ſcarlet at this reply, and hung down her baſhful head, while he took leave of her.

When Sir Edward returned to his lodgings his mind was quite in a ſtate of confuſion. He pitied, from his ſoul, the poor young creature whom he had juſt left; he ſaw, but too plainly, that he was, at preſent, neceſſary to her peace, and blamed himſelf exceedingly for not being able to return the paſſion which he had inſpired. The firſt wiſh of his heart had been to be loved for himſelf: here was the very woman who

ſo

ſo loved him: her fortune was ſufficient: even more than ſhe could well enjoy in her ſituation: that, added to her beauty, would at any time give her rank. There could be no intereſted views on her ſide. It muſt have been his perſon, his manner that had induced her to fix upon him. They lived indeed, her mother and ſhe, in a retired place, but ſhe had frequented the places of public diverſion. She therefore had ſeen a great deal of company, though ſhe had converſed but little with the polite world.

Why am I formed, ſaid he, to be thus particularly unhappy? I might have had my choice among numbers of fine, and perhaps very valuable women: but one only ever touched my heart, while hers was gone before I became

acquainted

acquainted with her. As ſoon as I had conquered a fruitleſs inclination for her, I became enamoured with another, who, if not ſo dazzling a beauty, is, to me, ſtill infinitely more enchanting, by a thouſand nameleſs graces, by a tender ſimplicity, and a winning modeſty which have charmed my very ſoul. With this beloved girl, this amiable dear one, might I, in all probability, have been at this moment bleſt, had not my abſurd, my ridiculous delicacy made me decline a declaration of my feelings in her favour, till ſhe was engaged to another. And now, another fine creature offers her heart to me, with every glance of her beautiful eyes; yet I cannot make either her or myſelf happy. Oh! Myra, Myra!—But why do I call on thee, dear, perhaps injured girl,

injured

injured by the very man who adores thee?

A letter from Mr. Elrington interrupted Sir Edward in the midſt of this ſoliloquy. He opened it in haſte. As ſoon as he had caſt his eyes over it, down it dropped from his hands.

End of the SECOND VOLUME.

4 DE 58